

THE COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE

BY H. DE BALZAC

SCENES FROM COUNTRY LIFE

THE COUNTRY DOCTOR

BALZAC'S NOVELS.

Translated by Miss K. P. WORMELEY.

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HONORÉ DE BALZAC

TRANSLATED BY

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

THE
COUNTRY DOCTOR



ROBERTS BROTHERS

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BOSTON

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE COUNTRY AND THE MAN	1
II. O'ER HILL AND DALE	34
III. THE NAPOLEON OF THE PEOPLE	160
IV. THE CONFESSION OF THE COUNTRY DOCTOR .	219
V. ELEGIES	268

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THE COUNTRY DOCTOR.

CHAPTER I.

THE COUNTRY AND THE MAN.

ON a lovely spring morning, in 1829, a man about fifty years of age was riding along a mountainous road which leads to a large village in the neighborhood of La Grande Chartreuse. This village is the market-town of a populous district enclosed within the circumference of a long valley. A torrent, with a rocky bed often dry, but filled at that season by the melted snows, waters this valley, whose heights command on either side the peaks of Dauphiné and the Savoie.

Though all the landscapes nestling within the chain of the two Mauriennes have a family likeness, the region through which the stranger was riding offered to the eye a diversity of ground and a changefulness of light and shadow which may be sought in vain elsewhere. At times the valley, widening suddenly, gave to view an irregular carpet of verdure, which constant irrigation, due to the mountains, kept ever fresh and tender to the eye. Sometimes a saw-mill showed its humble buildings picturesquely placed, its supply of fir-trees stripped of bark, its watercourse turned from the mountain torrent and led through troughs hollowed squarely

in great wooden logs, from whose crevices a filmy thread of water was escaping. Here and there, cottages surrounded by gardens filled with fruit-trees, then in flower, wakened the ideas which industrious poverty inspires. Farther on, houses with red roofs, made of flat tiles with rounded edges like the scales of a fish, told of the ease which comes of patient labor. Above each door hung a basket, in which the cheeses were put to dry. The hedges everywhere were bright with grapevines, twined, as in Italy, among dwarf elms whose foliage serves as fodder for the cattle. By a caprice of nature, the hills approach each other so closely in some places that there is no longer any room for mills, or fields, or cottages. Separated only by the torrent, which darts onward in cascades, the granite walls rise a hundred feet on either side, clothed with dark firs and beeches. Erect, fantastically colored with tufts of moss, and diverse in foliage, these trees form magnificent colonnades, edged above and below the roadway with irregular hedges of arbutus, viburnum, box, and sweet-brier. The fragrance of these shrubs blends with the penetrating odors of the young shoots of larches, poplars, and the resinous pine, and with the wilder, more subtle, and mysterious perfumes of a mountainous region, embodying, as it were, the deepest and sweetest secrets of nature, and breathing aromatic airs which stimulate old memories, as scents are wont to do. A few clouds floated among the rocks, veiling and unveiling the grizzled summits of the mountains, often as vaporous as the clouds themselves whose downy flakes they seemed to tear. Every instant the landscape changed its aspect, and the sky its light; the mountains

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changed their colors, the slopes their shadows, and the vales their shape. Innumerable vistas opened, which unlooked-for accidents — a ray of sunlight athwart the trunks of trees, an opening glade, a tangled brake — made delicious to the eye in the hush of silence, in the season of the year when all is young and the sun kindles a pure heaven. It was indeed a land of beauty ; it was France !

The traveller — a man of tall stature — was dressed wholly in blue cloth, as carefully brushed as the glossy hide of the horse on which he sat erect and firm as an old cavalry officer. If his black cravat, his doeskin gloves, the pistols protruding from his holsters, and the port-manteau securely fastened to the crupper of his saddle had not proclaimed him a soldier, his bronzed face, pitted with the small-pox, and its regular features stamped with evident *insouciance*, his decided manner, the assurance of his glance, the carriage of his head, would all have betrayed the regimental habits of which a soldier never divests himself, even after his return to domestic life. Other men might have marvelled at the various beauties of this alpine nature, so smiling as it nestles in the upland valleys of France ; but this officer, who had doubtless traversed many lands with the French armies of the imperial wars, enjoyed the landscape without apparent surprise at its manifold changes ; for astonishment is an emotion which Napoleon seems to have eradicated from the minds of his soldiers. The composure of a man's face is a sure sign by which an observer may recognize the men who were formerly enrolled under the ephemeral, but imperishable, eagles of the great emperor.

The traveller was, in fact, one of those officers, now few in number, whom the bullets spared, though he served on all the battlefields commanded by Napoleon. There was nothing extraordinary about his life. He had fought well and loyally in the ranks, doing his duty by night as by day, under the eye of his commander or away from him; never giving an unnecessary sabre-thrust, and incapable of giving one too many. The rosette of an officer of the Legion of honor, which he wore in his button-hole, came to him after the battle of the Moskowa, when he was chosen by the unanimous voice of his regiment as the one who, on that great day, proved most worthy to receive it. Belonging as he did to the limited number of men who are seemingly reserved and cold, timid in self-assertion and content within themselves, — men whose spirit is humiliated at the very thought of soliciting a favor, of whatever nature it may be, — his promotions had come to him only through the slow process of seniority. Made a sub-lieutenant in 1802, he was, despite his gray mustache, only in command of a squadron in 1829; and yet his life was so pure that no man in the army, not even the general, approached him without an involuntary feeling of respect, — an uncontested advantage, which his superiors may have been unwilling to forgive. On the other hand, and by way of compensation as it were, the common soldiers were devoted to him with a feeling like that of children towards a good mother, for to them he was both indulgent and severe. Once a soldier in the ranks like themselves, he knew all their miserable joys and their joyous miseries; the pardonable and the punishable delinquencies of men whom he always called his

"children," and allowed, during a campaign, to forage for fodder and provisions on the middle-class inhabitants of a country.

As to his private history, it was wrapped in impenetrable mystery. Like all soldiers of his epoch, he had seen the world only through the smoke of cannon, or in the brief intervals of peace, so rare in the European struggles which the emperor maintained. Had he ever thought of marriage? The question remained unanswered. Though no one doubted that the commandant¹ Genestas had had his love-affairs as he passed from garrison to garrison and from country to country, or shared in the *fêtes* given and received by the regiments, still no one had any actual knowledge of them. Without prudery, never declining any jovial amusement, never antagonistic to military morals, he either held his tongue or answered with a laugh, if questioned on the subject of his amours. To the words, "And you, captain, how is it with you?" addressed to him by some officer flushed with wine, he would answer, "Gentlemen, another glass!"

A sort of Bayard without assumption, Monsieur Pierre Joseph Genestas had nothing poetical or romantic about him; in fact he appeared commonplace. His dress was that of a man comfortably well off. Though he had nothing but his pay, and his pension was all he had to look to in the future, nevertheless, like the old wolves of commerce to whom ill-luck teaches an experience which turns to obstinacy, the cavalry captain always kept two years' pay ahead of him, and never spent the whole of his salary. He was so little of a gambler that

¹ Title given to the captain of a squadron of horse.

he looked another way when a hand was wanted at whist or an additional stake at *écarté*. But though he allowed himself no unusual expenses, he was not backward in those that were customary. His uniforms lasted longer than those of any officer in the regiment, by reason of the care which his limited means had early led him to bestow upon them, — a habit which had now become mechanical. He might have been suspected of avarice were it not for the admirable disinterestedness, the fraternal readiness, with which he opened his purse to some thoughtless young fellow ruined by cards or by other follies. It seemed as though he must himself have met with heavy losses at play, for he showed such delicacy in assisting others. He claimed no right to control the actions of his debtors, and never spoke of their indebtedness. Child of the regiment, alone in the world, he made the army his nation and the squadron his family. Consequently, people seldom asked the reason of his modest economies; on the contrary, they were glad to suppose he was making a provision of comfort for his old age. He was now on the eve of becoming a lieutenant-colonel of cavalry, and it might be presumed that his ambition looked to a future retirement to country life, with the epaulets and emoluments of a colonel.

If the younger officers talked of Genestas after morning drill, they classed him with the men who begin life by obtaining prizes at college for good conduct and continue for the rest of their days precise, upright, without passions, useful and colorless as white bread; but older and graver men judged very differently. Often a glance, an expression as full of meaning as the speech of a savage, escaped the man and revealed the storms of a

soul within him. To those who studied him, his calm brow showed the power of silencing his passions and driving them back into the depths of his heart, — a power dearly won through experience of danger and the unforeseen disasters of war. The son of a peer of France, who had lately joined the regiment, said one day apropos of Genestas, that he might have been “the most conscientious of priests, or the most honest of grocers — ”

“ — and the least fawning of marquises ! ” he remarked, eyeing the young dandy, who did not think his commander overheard him.

All present burst into a laugh ; for the father of the young man was known as the flatterer of all the powers that be, — an elastic man, who rebounded over the heads of revolutions ; and the son took after him.

The French armies could show other such characters, grand when the occasion offered, simple and unpretending when it had passed, indifferent to glory, forgetful of danger ; indeed, more such men were met with than the defects of human nature might allow us to suppose. Nevertheless, we should be strangely mistaken if we believed that Genestas was perfect. Suspicious, given to violent spirits of anger, aggravating in discussion, determined to be thought right when he was obviously in the wrong, he was full of national prejudices. Throughout his military life he had had a fondness for good wine. Though he always left the dinner-table with the due decorum of his rank, he was serious and meditative, and never, at such times, admitted any one to his secret thoughts. Though he knew the ways of the world and the laws of politeness tolerably well, a species of

army regulation which he observed with the stiffness of a martinet; though he possessed both natural and acquired sense; and understood tactics, drill, the principles of fencing on horseback, and all the secrets of veterinary art, his education in other respects was prodigiously neglected. He knew, though he knew it vaguely, that Cæsar was either a consul or a Roman emperor, Alexander a Greek or a Macedonian; he would have allowed you to say either without contradiction. Consequently, when the conversation became historical or scientific he grew silent, and limited his participation in it to little nods of comprehension, like those of a sage who has attained to pyrrhonism. When Napoleon wrote from Schœnbrunn, May 13, 1809, the famous bulletin addressed to the Grand Army, mistress of Vienna, declaring that "like Medea, the Austrian princes had strangled their own children," Genestas, lately appointed captain, was unwilling to compromise the dignity of his new rank by asking who Medea was; he relied upon the genius of Napoleon, confident that the emperor would only mention official matters to the Grand Army and the house of Austria, and concluded that Medea was some Austrian archduchess of equivocal behavior. Nevertheless, as the topic might concern military discipline, he felt uneasy about the Medea of the bulletin; so that when Mademoiselle Raucourt produced Medea on the stage, the captain, having read the announcement, repaired to the Théâtre Français to see the celebrated actress in that mythological character, — as to which he made sundry inquiries of his neighbor. A man who, in the ranks, had had the energy to learn how to read, write, and cipher, was surely capable of

understanding that a captain of cavalry must have an education. Accordingly, from the date of his promotion, he read with much ardor all the novels and current books of the day; which provided him with a certain amount of knowledge on which he contrived to make a fair appearance. Out of gratitude to these teachers, he went so far as to defend Pigault-Lebrun, declaring that he found him instructive and often profound.

This officer, whose acquired prudence never allowed him to make a useless expedition, had just left Grenoble and was on his way towards La Grande Chartreuse, after obtaining from his colonel a leave of absence for eight days. He was not intending to make a long trip; but, misled from mile to mile by the ignorant directions of the peasants whom he questioned by the way, he began to think it prudent not to ride farther without fortifying his stomach. Though there was little chance of finding any housewife at home, at a season when all were at work in the fields, he nevertheless stopped before some cottages clustered round an open space, which formed an irregular square open to all comers. The soil of this family territory was hard and well-swept, though cut up here and there by manure-pits. Rose-bushes, ivy, and tall shrubs climbed the cracks and crevices of the walls. A straggling currant-bush grew at the entrance to the square, on which some tattered clothing was hung to dry. The first inhabitant encountered by Genestas was a pig, wallowing in a heap of straw, who, hearing the tramp of a horse, raised his head, grunted, and put to flight a large black cat.

A young peasant girl, carrying on her head a bundle of herbs, suddenly appeared, followed at a distance by

four little brats, all in rags, but bold and noisy, brown and handsome, with daring eyes, — regular devils, who had little of the angel about them. The sun sparkled, and gave I know not what of purity to the air, to the cottages, to the manure-pits, to the tousled heads of the children. The soldier asked if he could have a glass of milk. For all answer the girl uttered a hoarse cry. An elderly woman appeared on the threshold of a cottage-door, and the young girl, after pointing to her, disappeared into a stable. Genestas rode towards the woman, carefully guiding his horse lest it should injure the children, who were now running about its legs. He renewed his request, which the woman refused to grant; she could not skim the cream, she said, which was meant for butter. The officer met the objection by offering to pay for the loss. He fastened his horse to the door-post and entered the cottage. The four children, who belonged to the woman, seemed all of one age, — a circumstance which struck the captain as curious. A fifth, clinging to her skirts, was feeble, pale, and sickly, and — needing, doubtless, all her care — seemed the best beloved, the Benjamin of the family.

Genestas sat down in a corner of the old chimney-place, where there was no fire; a colored plaster-cast of the Virgin holding the infant Jesus in her arms was on the mantel-shelf, — sublime emblem! The soil itself made the floor of the house; the surface, long since trodden down, though clean, was now roughened like the rind of an orange on a large scale. Within the fireplace hung a wooden shoe filled with salt, a gridiron, and a large kettle. The farther end of the room was completely filled by a four-post bedstead, with a scal-

loped vallance. Here and there were three-legged stools, made by driving three sticks into a mere bit of beech-board. A wooden locker that held the bread ; a large wooden ladle for dipping up water ; some earthenware bowls, and a pail to hold the milk ; a spinning-wheel standing on the locker ; some osier baskets for the cheese hanging against the blackened walls ; a worm-eaten door with an open iron grating, — such were the decorations and furniture of this humble dwelling. Here, then, is the first scene of a drama in which the officer, who was idly tapping the floor with his riding-whip and little suspecting the presence of any drama, was about to assist as a spectator.

When the old woman, followed by the sickly little Benjamin, disappeared through a door which opened into her dairy, the four children, having sufficiently examined the officer, proceeded to rid themselves of their companion, the pig. That animal, with whom they were in the habit of playing, had followed them to the sill of the door. The little monkeys rushed at him so vigorously, applying such characteristic slaps, that he was forced to beat a speedy retreat. The enemy routed, the children next attacked a door, whose latch yielded to their efforts and broke away from the worn-out staple which held it ; then they darted into a sort of fruit-room, where the captain, amused at the scene, saw them devouring dried plums. The old woman with the parchment face and the ragged clothing returned at this moment, bringing a jug of milk for her guest.

“ Ah ! the little scamps ! ” she said.

She followed the children, caught each of them by the arm, and flung them all back into the first room,

without, however, taking the plums from them; then she carefully fastened the door of her receptacle of plenty.

"There, there, my darlings, be good. If I didn't keep an eye on them, they would eat the whole heap, the rogues!" she said, looking at Genestas. Then she seated herself on a stool, took the sick child between her knees, and began, with womanly dexterity and maternal care, to comb its head, which was covered with a skin disease. The four little robbers remained quite still, some standing up, others hanging to the bed or against the locker, all dirty and sniffing, but sound and healthy, munching their prunes without a word, and gazing at the new-comer with mischievous and mocking eyes.

"Are they your children?" inquired the soldier.

"No, monsieur; they are foundlings from the hospital," said the woman. "I get three francs a month and a pound of soap for each of them."

"But, my good woman, they must cost you twice as much."

"That is what Monsieur Benassis tells us. But if others take the children at that price, we must, too. It is n't every one who can get them; indeed, we have got to go through a deal o' ceremony, as you might say. Suppose we do give them our milk for nothing. It does n't cost us anything. Besides, monsieur, three francs, — why, it's quite a sum, — that's fifteen francs a month, not counting five pounds of soap; and in these valleys we've got to wear our souls out to earn ten sous a day."

"Do you own your land?" asked the captain.

"No, monsieur, I had some at the time my man died ; but since his death I have been so poor I had to sell it."

"Then," said Genestas, "how can you keep free of debt at the end of the year, and bring up, feed, and wash for children at two sous a day?"

"Well, monsieur," she answered, "I don't get round to the Saint Sylvester without debts. But it can't be helped, and the good God lends a hand. I've two cows. My daughter and I glean in harvest-time, in winter we gather wood, and at night we spin. It would n't do, though, to have another such winter as the last. I owe seventy-five francs to the miller for flour. Luckily, he is Monsieur Benassis's miller. Ah! Monsieur Benassis, he's the poor folks's friend! He has never wrung his dues from any one, no matter who, and he won't begin with me. Besides, our cow has got a calf, and that will help along a bit."

The four orphans, for whom all human protection was restricted to the kindness of this old peasant woman, had now finished eating their prunes. They profited by the fact of her attention being diverted to the officer, and drew up in a close column for another attack on the door which parted them from the heap of plums. They advanced, not as French soldiers usually rush to the assault, but silently, like Germans, driven by naïve and unblushing greed.

"Ah! you little rascals! will you be done?"

The old woman got up, caught the strongest of the four, smacked him lightly with her hand, and drove him out of doors. He did not cry; but the others stood aghast.

"They give you a good deal of trouble," said Genestas.

"Oh, no, monsieur! they smell my prunes, the darlings! If I left them alone a moment they'd eat enough to burst themselves."

"You love them?"

At this question, the old woman raised her head, looked at the soldier with a half-amused expression, and replied: "Love them? don't I love them! I have just sent back three," she added, sighing. "I am only allowed to keep them till they are six years old."

"Where is your own child?"

"I have lost it."

"How old are you?" asked Genestas, to undo the effect of his previous question.

"Thirty-eight, monsieur. It will be two years this midsummer since my man died."

She finished dressing the little sufferer, who seemed to thank her with a wan and loving look.

"What a life of toil and self-forgetfulness!" thought the soldier.

Beneath this roof, worthy to be named with the stable where Christ was born, the hardest duties of maternity were fulfilled cheerfully and without pretension. What hearts are there, buried from human knowledge! What wealth, what penury! Soldiers appreciate better than other men how much there is of grandeur in the sublime self-abnegations of poverty, in the gospel of the poor and needy. Elsewhere we may find the Scriptures bound, as it were, in silk and satin, illuminated, illustrated, and adorned; but here, assuredly, was the spirit of the Book. It was impossible not to believe in some sacred

tradition of the heavens coming down through this woman, who had made herself a mother even as Jesus Christ had made himself a man; who gleaned and toiled and suffered and went in debt for outcast children, — refusing to perceive that she was ruining herself, — that she might be their mother. The sight of this woman's life compels us to admit the communion of spirits here below with the intelligences of a higher world. Captain Genestas looked at her and lowered his head.

"Is Monsieur Benassis a good doctor?" he said, at length.

"I don't know, monsieur; but he cures the poor for nothing."

"It seems," said the captain to himself, "as if the man really were a man."

"Ah! yes, monsieur, and a grand man! There's no one round here that does n't put him in their prayers, day and night."

"Here is something for you, mother," said the soldier, putting money into her hand; "and this is for the children," — giving her a crown-piece. "Am I far from Monsieur Benassis's house?" he asked after mounting his horse.

"Oh, no, monsieur, a short three miles at the most."

The captain rode away, concluding that he had six miles more to go. He had not ridden far, however, when he saw through the trunks of trees a group of houses, then the roofs of the houses clustering round a belfry which rose into a steeple, whose tiles were held, at the angles of the structure, by plates of metal that sparkled in the sunlight, — a species of roofing

original in effect, which belongs to the frontiers of Savoie, where it is in common use. The valley widened at this place. Several houses, pleasantly situated on the little plain, or on the banks of the stream, gave life and animation to the cultivated tract, hemmed in on all sides by mountains, and without apparent outlet.

A short distance from the village itself, which stood half way up a slope looking southward, Genestas stopped his horse under an avenue of willows, and asked a group of children who were playing there to show him the house of Monsieur Benassis. The children began by looking at each other; then they examined the officer with the look childhood employs when observing persons and things for the first time, all of which are so many new ideas to it. Then the boldest and merriest of the band, a little rascal with bright eyes, and naked feet covered with mud, repeated the question, after the fashion of children : —

“The house of Monsieur Benassis, monsieur?” Then he added, “I’ll take you there;” and marched before the horse, as much to gain a sort of importance by leading the way for a stranger, as from a childlike willingness to oblige, or the imperative necessity to be moving, which governs mind and body at that age. The officer followed him along the principal village street, a pebbly, winding road-way, lined with houses built according to the fancy of their several owners. Here a tower pushed forward into the public way, there a gable showed in profile with a section of its ridge-pole, and a brook, flowing from the mountain-side, crossed the street through a trench with a culvert. Genestas

noticed several roofs of black shingles, still more of thatch, a few of tiles, and six or eight, doubtless those of the curate, the *juge-de-peace*, and the bourgeois of the neighborhood, in slate. The place gave the idea of an isolated village beyond which no other world existed ; it appeared to touch and hold to nothing ; the inhabitants seemed like a single family far removed from social movement, connected with it only by the tax-gatherer or by imperceptible feelers.

When Genestas had advanced some distance, he saw a road higher up on the mountain-side which commanded the village street. There was, no doubt, an old and a new town. In fact, when the captain reached a spot where he slackened his horse's pace, he could see through an opening between the houses, other and well-built houses, whose new roofs enlivened the old village. From these buildings, above which rose an avenue of young trees, came the songs of busy laborers, the hum of workshops, the grinding of files, the sound of hammers, the confused cries of various industries. He noticed the thin smoke from the household chimneys and the fuller volume from the forges of the wheelwrights, the locksmiths, and the farriers. At last, towards the farther end of the valley, to which his guide led him, the captain saw some scattered farms and a tract of well-cultivated fields with plantations skilfully laid out ; like a little corner of Brie nestling in a vast fold of the landscape, whose existence between the village and the mountains he had not at first sight suspected.

Presently the child cried out : —

“There 's the door of *his* house !”

The officer dismounted, slipped the bridle over his

arm, and then, judging that all labor is worthy of its hire, he drew some coppers from his pocket and offered them to the boy, who took them with a puzzled air, opened his great eyes, returned no thanks, and stood by to see what would happen.

"Civilization is behindhand in these parts; the religion of labor is in full vigor, and beggary has not pushed its way in," thought Genestas.

More curious than interested, the small guide leaned against a wall, about four feet high, which encloses the courtyard of the house, and in which a black wooden lattice is inserted on either side of the gate-posts. The gate, the lower part of which is of wood formerly painted gray, is finished at the top with yellow bars in the form of stanchions. These ornaments, whose color has faded, take the shape of a crescent at the top of each half of the gate, and come together in a huge cone formed by the uprights when the gate is closed. This worm-eaten structure, dappled with velvet mosses, is half-destroyed by the alternate action of sun and rain. Overgrown with aloes and a chance growth of pellitory, the gate-posts hide the shoots of two thornless acacias which are planted within the courtyard, and whose green tops rise in the shape of powder-puffs. The condition of this gateway betrayed a want of care in its owner which seemed to annoy the soldier, who knitted his brows like a man forced to admit the loss of an illusion. We are accustomed to judge of others by ourselves; and though we graciously absolve them for faults which are like our own, we condemn them with severity if they have not our virtues. If the captain wished to find in Monsieur Benassis a careful and orderly man,

the gateway of his dwelling most assuredly proclaimed an absolute indifference to such proprieties. A soldier so wedded to domestic method as Genestas, was likely, on seeing the gate, to form rapid conclusions as to the life and character of its unknown proprietor, and the captain, in spite of his native caution, did not fail to do so.

The gate was ajar, — another piece of carelessness ! Profiting by this rural trustfulness, the officer rode into the courtyard without ceremony, and fastened his horse to the bars of the lattice. As he knotted the bridle, a neigh was heard in the adjacent stable which made both horse and rider look involuntarily in that direction. An old serving-man opened the door of the building and showed a head covered with the red woollen cap worn habitually by the country people, and precisely like the Phrygian cap with which we now bedeck the statues of Liberty. As there were stalls for several horses, the man, after asking Genestas if he had come to see Monsieur Benassis, offered him the hospitality of the stable for his horse, looking with an expression of tenderness and admiration at the animal, which was very handsome. The captain followed his horse to see how he was likely to fare. The stable was clean, the litter plentiful, and the two horses of Benassis had the contented look which makes a curate's horse distinguishable among all others of its species. A woman-servant, who came from the interior of the dwelling-house and stood on the portico, seemed to be officially waiting to be questioned by the stranger, who, however, had already heard from the stable-man that Monsieur Benassis was out.

“Our master has gone to the flour-mill,” he said.

"If you wish to join him, you have only to follow that path which leads to the meadows; the mill is at the end of it."

Genestas preferred to give a look to the country, rather than wait an indefinite time for Benassis's return, and he took the path toward the mill. When he reached the end of the village street, which cuts an irregular line on the mountain-side, he saw the valley, the mill, and one of the most enchanting landscapes he had ever yet seen.

The river, checked in its course by the base of the mountains, forms a little lake, from which the peaks rise in tiers, one above another, their numerous valleys suggested to the eye by changing tints of light, or by the outlines, more or less distinct, of their projecting ridges clothed with black pines. The mill, lately built at the spot where the torrent pours into the lake, has the charm of an isolated building hiding beneath the shade of aquatic trees in the midst of waters. On the other side of the river, at the foot of a mountain whose summit was just then lighted by the rays of a sun already on the decline, Genestas observed about a dozen deserted cottages, without doors or windows, their battered roofs showing wide gaps. The land around them had been converted into fields, carefully tilled and sown with grain; and their gardens were now meadows, watered by a system of irrigation laid out with as much art as in Limousin. The captain involuntarily stopped short to contemplate the ruined village.

Why is it that mankind can never look on ruins without deep emotion, be they ever so insignificant? Doubtless because they present an image of misfortune whose

weight is felt under so many and diverse forms by human nature. Cemeteries bring the thought of death; deserted villages a vision of life's woes: death is an expected evil, but the sorrows of life are infinite, and infinitude is the secret of the deepest dejection. The officer reached the paved path leading to the mill without being able to explain to himself the abandonment of the village. He inquired for Benassis of the miller's man, who was sitting on some sacks of wheat at the door of the building.

"Monsieur Benassis has gone over there," said the man, pointing to one of the ruined cottages.

"Was that village burned?" asked the captain.

"No, monsieur."

"Then why is it thus?"

"Ah! why indeed?" answered the miller, with a gesture of his shoulders as he turned into the house.

"Monsieur Benassis will inform you."

The officer crossed a species of bridge made by some large stones among which the torrent flows, and presently reached the cottage. The thatch of its roof was still intact, covered with moss, but without holes, and the doors and windows seemed to be in good condition. As he crossed the threshold, Genestas saw a fire in the chimney-place, at the corner of which an old woman was kneeling beside a sick man who was sitting in a chair, while another man stood by with his face turned toward the hearth. The interior of the house formed a single room, lighted through a wretched window-frame filled with calico. The floor was trodden earth. One chair, a table, and a pallet were the whole furniture. Never in his life had the captain seen such bareness, not even

in Russia, where the huts of the moujiks are like the dens of wild beasts. Nothing showed connection with the things of life; there was not even a utensil for the preparation of the commonest food. It was like the kennel of a dog without its platter. Were it not for a long blouse hanging from a nail, and some wooden shoes padded with straw, — the only clothing of the sick man, — this cottage would have seemed as deserted as the others. The kneeling woman, who was an aged peasant, was endeavoring to keep the patient's feet in a tub filled with brown water. At the sound of steps, which the jingle of spurs rendered unusual to ears accustomed to the plodding tread of the peasantry, the man turned round, and saw Genestas with an evident surprise, in which the old woman shared.

"I need not ask," said the soldier, "if you are Monsieur Benassis. As a stranger, impatient to see you, I trust you will pardon me for seeking you upon your battle-field instead of waiting at your house. Do not let me disturb you; continue what you are doing. When you have finished, I will tell you the object of my visit."

Genestas half seated himself on the edge of the table and remained silent. The fire cast a stronger light within the cottage than the sun could shed without, for its rays, intercepted by the summits of the mountains, never reached this portion of the valley. In the glow of the fire, which was made of the resinous pine which sends up a vivid flame, the soldier examined the face of the man whom some secret motive constrained him to seek, to study, and to thoroughly comprehend. Monsieur Benassis, the doctor of the

district, stood with folded arms coldly listening to Genestas, then he returned the captain's bow and gave his attention once more to the sick man, without noticing that he was himself the object of the keen scrutiny of the soldier.

Benassis was a man of ordinary height, but broad in the shoulders and wide in the chest. An ample green overcoat, buttoned to the throat, prevented the officer from seizing at a glance the characteristic points of the figure and carriage of this personage; but the shadow and the stillness in which the body was held served to throw the face, then lighted by the reflection of the fire, into strong relief. The man had a face which resembled that of the Faun of sculpture, — the same brow, slightly arched, but full of projections, all more or less significant; the same upward turn of the nose, with the *spirituel* expression of the cleft nostril; and the same high cheek-bones. The line of the lips was sinuous, and the lips themselves thick and red. The chin stood out abruptly. The eyes were brown and animated, with an ardent look, to which the pearly whiteness of the eyeball gave extraordinary brilliancy, telling of passions now subdued. The hair once black and now gray, the deep furrows in the face, and the heavy eyebrows already whitened, the nose grown veiny and bulbous, the yellow skin marbled with red patches, all denoted fifty years of life and the severe toil of his profession. The soldier could only guess at the shape and capacity of the head, then covered with a cap; but although it was thus partially concealed, it seemed to him one of those heads which are proverbially called "square." Accustomed, through his intercourse with the men of energy

whom Napoleon drew around him, to recognize the personal qualities of those who were destined for great deeds, Genestas felt that there was a mystery in this life thus hidden in obscurity, and asked himself, as he gazed at that remarkable face, —

“What chance, or fate, can have made him a country doctor?”

After earnestly studying that face, which, notwithstanding its analogies to other human faces, revealed a secret and hidden existence at variance with its apparently commonplace circumstances, Genestas was presently led to share in the attention the doctor was bestowing upon the sick man, and the sight of the latter completely changed the current of his thoughts.

In spite of his many military experiences, the old officer felt a shock of surprise, mingled with horror, as his eyes fell on a human face where the light of thought had never shone; a livid face, whose suffering seemed dumb and innocent, like that on the face of a child unable as yet to speak and weary of crying; it was the face of a creature only, — that of an old and dying crétin. The crétin was the only variety of the human species which the cavalry captain had not yet seen. At the sight of such a forehead, where the flesh made a thick, round fold; such eyes, like those of a boiled fish; a head covered with short and stubbly hair without natural juices, a flattened head, deprived of the organs of intelligence, who would not have felt, as Genestas did, an involuntary disgust for a being that had neither the graces of an animal nor the privileges of a man, — who had never possessed either reason or instinct, and had never heard or spoken any language? Watching

the poor creature as he neared the close of a career which was not life, it seemed difficult to feel a regret; and yet the old woman was gazing at him with tender anxiety, and rubbing his legs, where the scalding water did not reach them, with as much affection as if the man had been her husband. Benassis himself, after studying the lifeless face and the lack-lustre eyes, gently took the crétin's hand and felt his pulse.

"The bath does not act," he said, shaking his head; "we must put him back to bed."

He lifted the inert mass of flesh, carried it to the pallet, from which no doubt he had brought it, and laid it there, carefully extending the legs, already growing cold, and placing the head and hands with as much tenderness as a mother could give to her child.

"It is all over; he will die," added Benassis, who remained standing by the side of the bed.

The old woman, with her hands on her hips, dropped a few tears as she looked at the dying creature. Genestas was silent, unable to explain to himself why the death of so uninteresting a being should make such an impression on him. He instinctively shared the unbounded pity felt for these wretched creatures in the sunless valleys where fate has given them life. This pity, which degenerates into religious superstition in the communities to which crétins belong, is assuredly derived from the purest of Christian virtues, — charity, — and from that form of faith which is most conducive to social order, namely, the belief in future recompense, — the only belief which can make mankind accept their misery. The hope of winning eternal happiness helps the parents of these poor creatures, and the friends who

surround them, to practise, on a lifelong scale, the providence of motherhood in the sublime care unceasingly given to these inert beings, who, in the first place, cannot understand it, and, in the next, forget it. All-wise religion ! which has placed the mercies of a blind beneficence beside the miseries of a blind affliction. In the valleys where the crétins are found, the inhabitants believe that the presence of such beings brings happiness to their families. This belief renders those hapless lives easy in their country solitudes, whereas in cities they would be condemned by mistaken philanthropy to the discipline of hospitals. In the upland valley of the Isère, where they abound, the crétins live in the open air with the flocks, which they are trained to watch. They are, at any rate, free and respected, as the victims of misfortune should be.

Presently the village church-bell slowly tolled at regular intervals, letting the faithful know that death was among them. Travelling through space, the pious thought sounded faintly within the cottage and filled it with tender sadness. Numerous steps were heard along the path, and seemed to denote a crowd, though a silent one. Then the chants of the Church rose suddenly, and wakened the confused ideas which sway all souls, even the most sceptical, forcing them to surrender the mind to the tender modulations of the human voice. The Church was coming to the succor of the creature that knew it not. The curate appeared, preceded by the cross borne by a choir-boy, and followed by the sacristan bearing the holy-water, and by about fifty other persons — men, women, and children — who had come to join their prayers to those of the Church.

The doctor and soldier looked at each other in silence, and withdrew to a corner of the room to make way for the crowd, who knelt down within and without the cottage. During the consoling ceremony of the viaticum, celebrated for a being who had never sinned, but to whom the Christian world was bidding farewell, the greater number of the homely faces showed sincere emotion. Tears rolled down rough cheeks that were cracked by the sun and browned by outdoor toil. The feeling of voluntary relationship to those in trouble was a simple one. There were none in the village who did not pity the hapless creature; none who would not have given him of their daily bread: had he not found a father in every lad, a mother in even the merriest of the little girls?

"He is dead," said the curate.

The words caused genuine consternation. The wax tapers were lighted. Several persons wished to pass the night beside the corpse. Benassis and the soldier left the cottage. At the door, some peasants stopped the doctor, and said to him, "Ah! monsieur le maire, if you were not able to save him, the good God must indeed have wanted him."

"I did my best, my children," answered the doctor. "You can hardly imagine, monsieur," he added, turning to Genestas, when they were a few steps away from the deserted village, whose last inhabitant had just died, "what true consolation there is for me in the remark of those peasants. Ten years ago, I was nearly stoned to death in this village, now abandoned, but then inhabited by thirty families."

Genestas manifested such visible curiosity in his face

and gestures, that the doctor related to him, as they walked along, the history to which the foregoing is a preparation.

"Monsieur, when I came to settle here, I found a dozen or more crétins in this part of the district," said the doctor, turning round to point to the ruined cottages. "The situation of this hamlet, in a hollow with no current of air, near a torrent formed by the melting snows, deprived of the sun which only shines on the summit of the mountain, is especially conducive to the propagation of this frightful malady. The laws do not prevent the pairing of these unhappy creatures, who are protected here by a superstition whose strength was at first unknown to me, which I began by condemning, but which I now respect. Crétinism would soon have spread from this little nook throughout the valley. It was surely rendering the countryside a great service to check the spread of the mental and physical contagion. And yet, notwithstanding its urgent importance, the benefit came near costing the life of the man who undertook to carry it out. Here, as in other social spheres, it is necessary, in order to accomplish any reforms, to run counter not only to interests but to something far more difficult to deal with, to religious ideas which have grown into superstitions,—the most indestructible form of human thought.

"I was afraid of nothing. I asked, in the first place, to be appointed mayor of the district; that was granted: then, after obtaining the verbal consent of the prefect, I removed a number of these poor creatures quietly, by night and at my own expense, to Aiguebelle in Savoie, where there are many others of their kind, and where

they would be well treated. As soon as this act of humanity was known I became an object of horror to the whole population. The curate preached against me. In spite of my efforts to explain to the best minds in the community the importance of removing these idiots, in spite of the fact that I gave my services gratuitously to the sick, I was shot at from the cover of a wood. I went to see the Bishop of Grenoble, and asked him to change the curate. Monseigneur was good enough to let me choose a priest who would share in my work, and I was so fortunate as to find one of those men who really seem to have fallen from the skies. I pursued my course. After preparing people's minds, I sent away by night six more crétins. In this second attempt I was supported by certain persons who were under obligations to me, and also by members of the common council, to whose economy I appealed, by showing them how costly it was to support the hapless creatures, and how profitable it would be for the village to take their lands (to which they had no title) and turn them into pastures, of which the community was much in need.

“The prosperous people were on my side, but the poor, the old women, the children, and a few pig-headed fellows, remained hostile to me. Unfortunately, my last exportation was not complete. The crétin whom you have just seen was absent from his home at the time; he was not taken, and was found the next day—the last of his kind—in the village, where there still remained a few families whose members, though nearly imbecile, were, so far, exempt from crétinism.

“I wished to carry out my plans, and I went one day,

in official clothes, to take that unfortunate crétin from his cottage. My intention was guessed as soon as I left my own door; the friends of the crétin preceded me, and I found at the cottage an assemblage of women, children, and old men, who received me with insults and a shower of stones. In the midst of the uproar, when I was really in danger of falling a victim to the sort of intoxication which seizes upon a crowd of people when excited by cries and by the agitation of emotions uttered in common, I was saved by the crétin! The poor creature came out of the hut, made his clucking noise, and became at once the supreme head of the fanatics. At this apparition the cries ceased. It occurred to me to propose a compromise; which the fortunate hush enabled me to explain. My supporters had not dared to sustain me openly at this crisis; their help was purely passive. The superstitious crowd were resolved to keep their last idol and watch over him. I saw it was impossible to take him from them. I therefore promised to leave him in peace in his cottage, on condition that no one entered it, and that all the families of the village should cross the torrent and take up their abode in certain new houses, which I pledged myself to build and to endow with land, the price of which should be returned to me later by the township.

"Well, my dear monsieur, it took me six months to overcome the resistance which was made to the terms of this agreement, advantageous as it was to the families of the old village. The affection of the peasantry for their hovels is an inexplicable fact. No matter how unhealthy his cottage may be, the peasant is more attached to it than a banker is to his mansion. Why?

I cannot tell you. Perhaps the strength of feelings is in proportion to their rarity. Perhaps the man who lives little in thought lives much in things, and the less of them he possesses the more he loves what he has. Possibly it is with a peasant as it is with a prisoner; he does not fritter away the powers of his mind, he concentrates them on a single idea, and comes in that way to great energy of feeling.

"Excuse these reflections in a man who is seldom able to exchange his ideas, and pray believe, monsieur, that I am not much given to abstract thought. Here, all is practice and action. Alas, the fewer ideas these poor people have, the harder it is to make them understand their real interests. So I have resigned myself to the petty details of my enterprise. Each of the villagers said to me the same thing, — a thing so full of plain sense as to admit of no answer, — 'Ah! monsieur, your houses are not yet built.' 'Well,' I answered, 'promise to come and live in them when they are built.'

"Fortunately, monsieur, I was able to get a decision of the courts to the effect that our village owns the whole mountain on which it stands, and at the foot of which is the old hamlet, now deserted. The value of the wood on the heights was enough to pay for the houses, which were built at once. When the first of my refractories had fairly moved in, the rest followed. The comfort which resulted from the change was too real not to be appreciated even by those who clung most superstitiously to their old village without sun, — that is, without soul. The end of the matter was, that the acquisition of the mountain as communal property, which was confirmed

to us by the Council of State, gave me great importance in the district. But oh, monsieur, what anxieties!" said the doctor, lifting a hand which he let fall again with an eloquent gesture. "I alone know the weary way from the village to the prefecture, out of which nothing can be got; and from the prefecture to the Council of State, into which nothing can be made to enter.

"However," he resumed, "peace be with the powers that be! they yielded at last to my importunities, and that is a great deal to say for them. If people only knew the good often done by a carelessly given signature! Monsieur, two years after attempting my great little efforts and bringing them to a successful conclusion, all the poor households of my district owned at least two cows and sent them to pasture on the mountain, where, without waiting for the decision of the Council of State, I had cut transversal irrigations like those in Auvergne, Limousin, and Switzerland. The villagers, to their great surprise, saw excellent meadows springing up, by which they obtained a greater quantity of milk, thanks to the better quality of the grass. The results of this triumph were great. Everyone imitated my system of irrigation. The pastures, the cattle, and all their products multiplied. From that time I no longer feared to ameliorate the condition of this little corner of the earth, still so uncultivated, or to civilize its inhabitants, who, up to that time, were almost wholly devoid of intelligence. Ah, monsieur, we solitaries are great talkers; if anybody questions us, no one knows where the reply will end.

"When I came to this valley the population was seven hundred souls; now it is two thousand. After

a steady course of mild, but firm government, I became the oracle of my people. I did all I could to deserve their confidence without asking for it, or seeming to desire it: only, I endeavored to inspire respect for my person by the religious good faith with which I fulfilled all my engagements, even the most trifling. After pledging myself to take care of the poor creature who has just died, I watched over him better than his former protectors ever did; he has been fed and cared for as the adopted child of the village commune. Later on, the inhabitants grew to understand the service I had done them against their will. However, they still retain part of their old superstition, and I am far from blaming them. Their worship of the crétin has often served me as a text to persuade persons of intelligence to help the unfortunate. But here we are," added Benassis, after a pause, as they came in sight of the roof of his house.

So far from expecting words of praise or acknowledgment from his visitor, he seemed, in relating this episode of his official life, to have yielded to that ingenuous need of expression which is often felt by persons who live retired from the world.

"Monsieur," said the captain, "I have taken the liberty to put my horse in your stable, and I hope you will excuse me when you know the object of my journey."

"Ah! what is it?" asked Benassis, with the air of a man who leaves his own preoccupation and recollects that his companion is a stranger.

His naturally frank and communicative nature had led him to treat Genestas as an acquaintance.

"Monsieur," answered the soldier, "I have heard of the wonderful cure you made in the case of Monsieur Gravier of Grenoble, whom you took into your house. I come here in hopes of obtaining the same care; though without having the same claim upon your kindness. And yet, perhaps you will think I have some title to it. I am an old soldier, whose former wounds give him little rest. You will need at least a week to examine into my condition; for my sufferings occur only at intervals and —"

"Well, monsieur," said Benassis, interrupting him; "Monsieur Gravier's bedroom is always ready. Come."

They entered the house, and the doctor slammed the door with an eagerness that Genestas attributed to his pleasure at getting a lodger.

"Jacquette!" cried Benassis, "this gentleman will dine here."

"But, monsieur," said the soldier, "had we not better settle the price?"

"Price of what?"

"Of my board. You cannot take me and my horse without —"

"If you are rich," said Benassis, "you can pay me; if you are not, I want nothing."

"Nothing seems to me too dear," said Genestas. "But, whether I am rich or poor, will ten francs a day, not counting the value of your professional services, be agreeable to you?"

"Nothing is more disagreeable to me than to receive any payment whatever for the pleasure of exercising hospitality," answered the doctor, frowning. "As to my services, you can have them only if I like you."

Rich people cannot buy my time; it belongs to the inhabitants of this valley. I desire neither fame nor fortune; I ask for no praise and no gratitude from my patients. The money which you give me will go to the apothecaries at Grenoble to pay for the indispensable medicines of the poor of this district."

Any one hearing these words, which were said brusquely yet without bitterness, would have thought, as Genestas did, "The man has a fine nature!"

"Then, monsieur," said the captain, with his usual tenacity of purpose, "I will pay you ten francs a day; and you shall do as you like for the rest. That settled, we shall understand each other better," he added, taking the doctor's hand and shaking it with impressive cordiality. "In spite of my ten francs, you will find that I am not an Arab."

After this dispute, in which Benassis showed no disposition to appear generous or philanthropic, the pretended invalid entered the house of his physician, where everything seemed in keeping with the dilapidated gateway and the clothing of its owner. Even trifles revealed a profound indifference to all that was not essentially useful. Benassis took the soldier through the kitchen as the shortest way to the dining-room. Though the kitchen, as smoke-stained as that of an inn, was provided with a sufficient number of cooking utensils, such luxury was owing to Jacquotte, formerly the curate's servant, who now reigned supreme over the doctor's household, and always spoke of "us." If a warming-pan was suspended over the mantel-shelf, it is probable that Jacquotte liked to sleep comfortably in winter, and so, by ricochet, warmed her

master's bed; for he, as she said truly, "paid no attention to anything." Benassis had hired her for precisely what would have seemed an intolerable defect to any one else. Jacquotte wished to rule the house, and the doctor wanted a woman who would rule his house. Jacquotte bought, sold, arranged, changed, placed, and displaced everything according to her own good pleasure. Her master never objected to any of her doings; she ruled over the courtyard, the stable, and the stable-man, the kitchen, the garden, and the master. The linen was changed, the washing was done, the provisions were stored by her orders. She decided when the pigs were to be killed, scolded the gardener, chose the breakfasts and dinners, ranged from cellar to garret and from garret to cellar, and swept everything before her, without ever finding any one to oppose her. Benassis required but two things, — dinner at six o'clock, and to spend no more than a certain sum monthly. A woman whom everybody obeys is always happy; accordingly, Jacquotte laughed and sang like a nightingale, upstairs and down, humming when she did not sing, and singing when she did not hum. Clean by nature, she kept the house clean. She used to say that if her own taste had been different Monsieur Benassis would have been very miserable, for the poor man took so little notice of what he ate that she could serve cabbages for partridges and he would never know it; and if it were not for her, he would wear a shirt a week. Jacquotte was an indefatigable ironer of linen, by nature a rubber of furniture, the devotee of a cleanliness that was truly ecclesiastical, — the most scrupulous, shining, and sweet-smelling cleanliness in the

world. The sworn enemy of dust, she dusted, swept, and garnished incessantly. The condition of the gateway caused her real distress. For ten years past, she had extracted from her master on the first of every month a promise to make the gate as good as new, to paint the walls of the house, and otherwise renew things "prettily;" and, so far, Monsieur had not kept his word. Therefore, whenever she deplored her master's profound indifference to his own affairs, she seldom failed to utter this sacramental phrase, with which she wound up all her praises of her master:—

"It can't be said that he is actually stupid, because he has almost performed miracles in the neighborhood; but for all that, he is stupid sometimes,—so stupid that you've got to put things into his hands as if he were a baby."

Jacquotte loved the house as though it belonged to her. When Benassis came to the village, it happened to be for sale after the death of its former occupant, the curate, and he bought it as it stood,—house, and ground, furniture, crockery, wine, chickens, the old clock with a painted dial, the horse, and the cook. Jacquotte, a pattern for the culinary species, had a thick waist and large bosom, clothed invariably in brown calico with red spots, which was fastened so tightly that the stuff seemed in danger of cracking if she made the slightest exertion. She wore a plaited, round cap, beneath which her rather pallid face, with its double chin, seemed whiter than it really was. Short and active, with brisk, plump hands, Jacquotte was a loud and continual talker. If she was silent for a moment and lifted the corner of her apron triangu-

larly, it meant that she was about to address some vehement remonstrance to her master or the manservant. Of all the cooks throughout the kingdom, Jacquotte was certainly the happiest. To make her happiness as complete as any happiness can be in this lower world, her vanity was perpetually satisfied; the village accepted her as an authority whose powers combined those of the mayor and the *garde-champêtre*.

Her master, entering the kitchen, found no one there.

"Where the devil have they gone!" he said. "Excuse me," he added, turning to Genestas, "for bringing you in this way. The ceremonious entrance is through the garden, but I am so little used to receiving company that — Jacquotte!"

At the name, imperiously uttered, a woman's voice answered from the interior of the house; and a moment later Jacquotte took the offensive, and herself called Benassis, who immediately went to her in the dining-room.

"Here it is again, monsieur!" she said; "you are always doing these things! You invite people to dinner without letting me know, and you think everything can be served up when you call Jacquotte! What did you take the gentleman into the kitchen for? The *salon* could have been opened and a fire lighted; Nicolle is there now and will soon have it all ready. Now, please take your gentleman into the garden, it will amuse him; and if he likes pretty things, show him the mountain-ash alley of the late master; and then I shall have time to get the dinner ready, and set the table, and see about the *salon*."

"Yes. But, Jacquotte," continued Benassis, "the

gentleman is going to stay here. You must give an eye to Monsieur Gravier's bedroom, and see to the sheets and all that, and — ”

“Now don't go and meddle about sheets and things,” said Jacquotte. “If he is going to sleep here I know perfectly well what he wants. You have n't been inside Monsieur Gravier's room these six months. There's nothing to be done there; it is as clean as — So the gentleman is really going to stay here?” she added, in a softened tone.

“Yes.”

“For long?”

“Faith, I don't know. What does that signify to you?”

“What does it signify, monsieur? Ha, I like that! as if it did n't signify! How about the provisions, and — ”

Without continuing the flood of words with which on any other occasion, she would have overwhelmed her master in reproach for his lack of confidence, she followed him into the kitchen. Guessing that a boarder was in prospect, she was impatient to see Genestas, to whom she made an obsequious courtesy while examining him from head to foot. The soldier's face had, at the moment, a sad and thoughtful expression, which gave him a harsh appearance; the colloquy between master and maid seemed to him to reveal the former as a non-entity, and to lessen, much to his regret, the high opinion he had begun to form of his character while admiring his persistency in saving the little valley from the horrors of crétinism.

“He does n't please me at all, that man!” thought Jacquotte.

"If you are not tired, monsieur," said the doctor to his pretended patient, "we will take a turn round the garden before dinner."

"Willingly," replied the captain.

They crossed the dining-room, and went to the garden through a sort of antechamber formed at the bottom of the staircase, which separated the dining-room from the *salon*. This room had a large glass-door and opened on a stone terrace that ran along the façade of the house on the garden side. The garden itself, divided into four large equal squares by paths, bordered with box which outlined a cross, terminated at the farther end in a thick group of mountain-ash trees, the pride of the former proprietor. The captain sat down on a worm-eaten bench, without noticing the grape-vine trellises, nor the espaliers, nor the vegetables; of which Jacquette took the greatest care, having been trained to it by the ecclesiastical gourmand to whom the house owed its precious garden, — which Benassis himself cared little for.

Suddenly breaking off the conversation on ordinary topics in which they were now engaged, Genestas said to the doctor: —

"How did you manage, monsieur, to triple the population of this valley in ten years? You found seven hundred souls, and now have, as you tell me, more than two thousand."

"You are the first person who has asked me that question," answered the doctor. "Though my aim has been to make this little corner of the earth as productive as possible, yet the hurry of my busy life has left me little leisure to reflect upon the methods I have

employed to make, on a large scale, what the mendicant friar called a species of 'pebble soup.' Monsieur Gravier himself, one of our benefactors, and to whom I was able to render a service by curing him, never once thought of the theory of the thing, as he followed me across hill and vale to see the practical results."

They were silent for a moment, during which Benassis was buried in thought, without noticing the piercing look with which his guest tried to penetrate him.

"How was it done, my dear monsieur?" he resumed; "why, naturally and by virtue of the social law of attraction between the necessities we create and the means of satisfying them. That's the secret of it. People without wants are poor. When I came to settle here, there were one hundred and thirty peasant families in this village, and two hundred down there in the valley. The authorities were in keeping with the general poverty; there was a mayor who did not know how to write; the assistant-mayor was a farmer residing a long distance from the township; the justice of the peace, a poor devil living on his salary, and forced by ignorance to leave the drawing up of deeds and documents to his clerk, who was another unfortunate hardly able to understand his business. The former parish priest died at the age of seventy, and his vicar, a man without education, had succeeded him. These persons comprised the whole intelligence of the community which they governed. In the midst of this beautiful nature the inhabitants were sunk in degradation; they lived on potatoes, and milk and its products. The cheeses, which most of them carried to Grenoble and its environs in little baskets, were the only produce from which they were able to derive

a trifling amount of money. Those who were most prosperous, or least lazy, sowed a little buckwheat for consumption in the village, sometimes barley or oats; never any wheat. The only trade in the whole community was that of the mayor, who owned a saw-mill, and bought felled trees at a low price, which he cut up. The lack of roads compelled him to transport them one by one during the fine weather, by means of a chain fastened at one end to the harness of a horse, and at the other by an iron grapnel to the tree itself. To reach Grenoble either on foot or on horseback, it was necessary to follow the crest of the mountain, the valley being impassable. The land from here to the first village which you saw as you entered the district, and the pretty road by which I suppose you came, was at all seasons a vast swamp.

"No political event, no revolution, had ever penetrated this inaccessible valley, completely shut away from all social movement. Napoleon's name alone had reached it; and here that name was a religion, thanks to two or three old soldiers who belonged to the countryside and had returned to their former hearths, telling fabulous tales of the emperor and his armies to the simple folk in the winter evenings. The return of these men to their native valley is an almost inexplicable fact. Before my arrival, the recruits who went to the army stayed there. This alone shows the poverty of the region so plainly as to relieve me of picturing it to you.

"Such, monsieur, was the condition of the district when I took charge of it and of certain of its dependencies lying on the other side of the mountains, which latter are well cultivated, tolerably happy, and almost

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rich. I will not tell you of the hovels, actual stables, where man and beast were huddled together pell-mell. I passed through the village for the first time on my way from La Grande Chartreuse. Not finding any inn, I was obliged to stay with the vicar, who occupied this very house, which was then for sale. By putting question after question, I obtained a superficial knowledge of the deplorable condition of this region, whose delightful climate, excellent soil, and fine natural productions had enchanted me.

“Monsieur, I was seeking to make myself a life other than the one sorrows had made a burden to me. A thought entered my heart such as God sends to make us willing to bear our griefs. I resolved to instruct and raise this corner of the earth, as a teacher brings up a child. Do not call it benevolence; my motive was the need I felt to distract my mind. I wanted to spend the remainder of my days in some arduous enterprise. The changes to be introduced into this region, which nature had made so rich and man had made so poor, would occupy my whole life; they attracted me by the very difficulty of bringing them about. As soon as I was sure of buying the parsonage-house together with a good deal of barren and unprofitable ground at a low price, I vowed myself solemnly to the life of a country doctor,—the last life a man would choose among his own people. I wished to be a friend to the poor, expecting nothing in return. I allowed myself no illusions, either as to the character of the country-people or the obstacles which hinder those who attempt to ameliorate both men and things. I made no idyls about my poor; I took them for what they were,—

ignorant peasants, neither altogether good nor altogether bad; kept by constant toil from the exercise of feeling, and yet able at times to feel keenly. Above all, I saw that I must act upon them through their interests and their immediate well-being. The peasantry are true sons of Saint Thomas the incredulous: they want facts to support words.

"You will, perhaps, smile at my first steps, monsieur," resumed the doctor, after a pause. "I began the difficult enterprise by the manufacture of baskets. These poor people bought at Grenoble the little wicker crates in which they keep their cheeses. I suggested to an intelligent young man the idea of cultivating the banks of the mountain torrent, — a large tract of alluvial soil which the freshets yearly enriched, and where osiers would readily grow. After computing the amount of basket-work which the district yearly required, I searched Grenoble for a young basket-maker without pecuniary prospects, but a clever workman. When I found the right man, I easily persuaded him to settle here, promising to advance the cost of purchasing osier until my plantations were sufficiently grown to furnish it. I induced him to sell his baskets below the price asked for them at Grenoble, and at the same time to make them of better quality. He entered into my ideas. The cultivation of the osier-beds and the basket manufactory were, at first, a speculation, whose results could not be reached in less than four years. You know, perhaps, that the osier is not fit to cut until the third year. During his first season, my basket-maker contrived to make enough to feed him. He soon after married a woman of Saint-Laurent du Pont, who had some money. With

that he built himself a good and airy house in a healthy situation, whose interior was arranged according to my advice.

“What a triumph, monsieur ! I had created a village industry ; I had set to work a producer and a number of workmen. You will think my delight childish ; but the first few days after the manufactory was under way I could not pass before the shop without a quickening of my pulses ; and when, inside the new house with its green blinds, a bench before its door, a grape-vine, and bundles of osiers, I saw a clean woman, neatly dressed, suckling a fat and rosy child in the midst of a happy group of workmen, who were singing as they worked, and deftly plaiting the osier under orders of a man who, lately poor and emaciated, was now glowing with happiness, then, indeed, monsieur, I could not resist being a basket-maker myself for a while ; I used to enter the shop to inquire how they were getting on, and I abandoned myself to a happiness I really cannot explain to you. I was joyful with the joy of these people and with my own joy.

“The house of the master-workman, the first man who had firmly believed in me, was now the centre of my hopes. Monsieur, it was the future of this poor countryside which I bore upon my heart as the wife of the basket-maker bore her first babe upon her bosom. I had to keep abreast of many prejudices and run counter to many ideas. I met with violent opposition, instigated by the ignorant mayor whose office I had taken. His influence, however, vanished before mine, and I resolved to make him my assistant, and associate him with my beneficent labors. Yes, monsieur, it was into his head,

the thickest and hardest of all, that I first endeavored to shed light. I captured him through his self-love and his self-interest. For six months we dined together daily, and I made him share in my plans of amelioration. Many persons would think this forced friendship one of the annoyances of my task; not so, the man was a necessary instrument, and the most valuable of all. Ill-luck to him who despises the hatchet, or throws it carelessly aside! And besides, how inconsistent to dream of reforming a region of country and yet shrink from the idea of reforming one man!

“The most urgent need of all was for a highway. If we obtained from the municipal council the right to construct a cross-road between the village and the main road to Grenoble, my assistant-mayor would be the first to profit by it; for, instead of dragging his trees at great expense through tangled wood-paths, he could transport them easily along a good district road, and open a large business in all kinds of wood; by which he would earn, not a miserable six hundred francs a year, but round sums of money amounting at some future day to a settled fortune. At last the man was fully convinced, and became my proselyte. During the whole of one winter, the former mayor spent his evenings at a wine-shop among friends, explaining to them that a good carriage-road would be the making of the country-side by enabling everybody to do business with Grenoble. When the municipal council voted to make the road, I obtained from the prefect an advance from the charitable funds of the department, so as to pay for certain transportation which our community was unable to undertake for want of hand-carts. To finish the

great work rapidly, and get its results at once appreciated by ignorant persons who accused me of wishing to restore feudal labor, I compelled, every Sunday during the first year of my administration, the entire population, men, women, children, and even old men to go, whether they would or not, to the crest of the mountain, where I had myself surveyed and marked out, on excellent soil, the road which now leads from our village to the highway to Grenoble. Abundant material for the making of the road was fortunately found along its track.

“The undertaking required my utmost patience. Some persons, ignorant of the law, objected to payment in kind; others, who were almost starving, could not afford to lose the opportunity of an extra day’s work. I had to pay the latter at once by distributing wheat, and soothe the former as best I could with amicable words. However, when we had finished two thirds of the road, which is about five miles long, the villagers had found out its advantages; and the last third was made with an eagerness which really surprised me. I enriched the future of the village by planting a double row of poplars along the lateral ditches on either side of the new road. These trees at the present time are almost a revenue, besides giving a stately appearance to the road, which is always dry by reason of its situation, and so well made that it costs scarcely two hundred francs a year to keep it in repair. I will show it to you, for you may not have seen it; you probably came by the pretty lower road, — a route the inhabitants laid out for themselves about three years ago, to open communication with various establishments since set

up along the valley; thus proving, monsieur, that the common-sense of a community once so unintelligent, has acquired ideas which, a few years earlier, a traveller might well have despaired of ever inculcating.

"But to go on with my story:—The establishment of my basket-maker was a fruitful example to the poor. Though the new road was the direct cause of the village prosperity, yet it was necessary to incite various primitive industries, to make these two germs of prosperity more useful. While helping the man with the osier-beds, and the basket-maker with his trade, and constructing my road, I quietly continued my work in other directions. I had two horses, my associate the wood-merchant, had three; we could only have them shod when we went to Grenoble. I therefore persuaded a blacksmith, who knew something about the veterinary art, to come here under promise of certain work. It happened that on the same day I met an old soldier, at odds with fate, whose only means of living was a pension of one hundred francs. He knew how to read and write, and I gave him the place of clerk at the *mairie*; by a lucky chance, I found him a wife, and his humble dreams of happiness were accomplished. Monsieur, I had to provide houses for these new-comers, and for my basket-maker, and for the twenty-two families who were to leave the village of the *crétins*. Twelve other households, whose bread-winners were workmen, producers, and consumers, accordingly came to settle here,—masons, carpenters, tilers, joiners, locksmiths, and glaziers, who found work for some time. They built houses for themselves after building those of other people; and with them

came additional laborers. In the second year of my administration seventy new houses were built in the district.

“One form of production compelled another. In peopling the village I created new wants, hitherto unknown to this poverty-stricken people. Wants led to industries, industries to commerce, commerce to profits, profits to comfort, comfort to beneficial ideas. These various work-people wanted their bread ready-baked, and we got a baker. Buckwheat could no longer be the only food of a population that was now raised from its degrading inertia and had grown essentially active. I had found it eating buckwheat; my first wish was to give it rye, then rye and wheat, and at last, some day, to see the poorest of these people eating good white bread. To my mind, intellectual progress depends entirely on sanitary progress. A butcher shows the intelligence and the wealth of a community. He who works eats, and he who eats thinks. Foreseeing the day when the cultivation of wheat would be a necessity, I had carefully examined the qualities of the soil. I found I could be certain of launching the village into great agricultural prosperity and doubling its population whenever the time came to undertake the work.

“It did come. Monsieur Gravier of Grenoble owned certain property in the district, from which he drew no revenue, but which might easily be converted into wheat-lands. He is, as you know, the head of a department at the prefecture. He had already listened very readily to my suggestions. As much from attachment to his native place as from conviction under my arguments, he had very kindly furthered my demands ;

I succeeded in making him see that he had unconsciously served his own interests. After several days of conferences, debates, and persuasions, and after pledging my own property to secure him against the risks of an enterprise from which his wife, a narrow-minded woman, tried to frighten him, he consented to set up four farms of one hundred acres each, and to advance the costs of clearing the land, buying seed-corn, agricultural implements, oxen, etc., and making the necessary farm-roads. I, on my part, laid out two farms, partly to cultivate my barren and unprofitable tract of land, and partly to teach, by example, the useful methods of modern agriculture. In six weeks the village population increased by three hundred inhabitants. Six farms, where several families settled, large tracts of land to clear, much ploughing and tilling to do, of course brought laborers. Diggers, wheelwrights, journeymen, and mechanics flocked in. The road to Grenoble was alive with persons coming and going, and with the two-wheeled carts of the country-side. There was a general stir of life on all sides. The circulation of money gave birth to a desire to make money; apathy was past and gone; the village had waked up.

"I will end my story of Monsieur Gravier, one of the benefactors of this district, in two words. Notwithstanding the distrust commonly felt by the citizen of a country town and by a man in office, and relying on my promises, he advanced more than forty thousand francs, without any certainty of recovering them. Each of his farms is now let for a thousand francs; his farmers have done so well that all of them own at least a hun-

dred acres of land, three hundred sheep, twenty cows, ten oxen, five horses; and each gives employment to more than twenty persons. During the fourth year our farms were all in working order. We had a wheat harvest which, abundant as it naturally was on virgin soil, seemed miraculous to the country people. I often trembled for the success of my work during that year! Rain or drought might ruin it, by lessening the confidence I was then beginning to inspire. The cultivation of wheat necessitated the flour-mill you have just seen; and it now brings me in five hundred francs a year. The peasants declare that luck is on my side, and they have come to believe in me as firmly as in their relics.

“These new enterprises, the farms, the mill, the osier-beds, the road-making, have given employment to all the trades and handicrafts I had brought here. Though our outlay of sixty thousand francs is amply covered by the buildings we have put up, yet the money has been returned to us by the profits derived from consumers. My efforts to keep alive all budding industries are never relaxed. By my advice, a nurseryman settled in the hamlet, and I preached the cultivation of fruit-trees to my poor villagers, so as to win a monopoly of the Grenoble fruit-market at some future time. ‘You take your cheeses there,’ I said to them; ‘why should n’t you take fruit, vegetables, chickens, eggs, game, hay, straw, etc.?’ Each item of that advice was the source of prosperity to those who followed it. Thus a multitude of little industries sprang up, whose progress, slow at first, has increased rapidly from day to day. Every Monday morning at least sixty carts go to Gren-

able laden with our various produce; more buckwheat is now cultivated to feed the chickens than was formerly cultivated to feed the population.

"The wood business became too large for one establishment, and it is now subdivided. In the fourth year of our industrial era, we had traders in fire-wood, in planks and shingles, in bark; and then, coal dealers. After a while four new saw-mills for planks and joists were started. The former mayor, in acquiring commercial ideas, felt the need of knowing how to read and write. He compared the prices of wood in different localities, and found such differences, all in favor of his own enterprise, that he gained customers in many new places, and supplies to-day nearly a third of the department. Our means of transportation increased so rapidly that we now employ three wheelwrights, two harness-makers, and each of these employs not less than three apprentices. We use so much iron that a tool-maker has come to the valley, and finds sufficient work. The hope of gain soon developed ambitions which drove my now industrious village population to compete with the whole district, and even with the department, and thus increase their profits by increasing their sales. I had but to say the word and point the way to fresh markets; their own good sense did the rest. Four years had sufficed to change the whole aspect of the village. When I first passed through it, I heard not a sound; but by the beginning of the fifth year all was life and animation. Joyous songs, the noise of workshops, the sharp or dull creaking of tools, sounded delightfully in my ears. I saw a busy population coming and going, and settling in the new village,

now planted with trees, and where everything was clean and healthsome. Every inhabitant had a sense of his own well-being; every face was bright with the contentment that a busy, useful life bestows.

“These five years are to my mind the first era in the prosperous life of our valley,” resumed the doctor after a pause. “During that time I had cleared the ground, and set things fructifying in the heads and in the soil of the community. The onward progress of the population and its various industries could not now be stopped. A second era was about to open. Soon the little society wished to better its dress. A mercer came among us, then a shoemaker, a tailor, and a hatter. This beginning of luxury was really of as much benefit as the butcher and the grocer had been. Next a midwife became essential to my practice, for I was losing much time with my lying-in cases. The newly reclaimed lands gave excellent harvests, and the superior quality of our agricultural products was maintained by the various kinds of manure which increase of population afforded. My undertaking was now prepared to develop as it would to all results.

“Having bettered the sanitary condition of the dwellings, and brought the inhabitants gradually to eat better food, and wear better clothes, I now desired that the animals might reap some benefit from this beginning of civilization. On the care and attention given to cattle depends the beauty of breeds and of individual specimens; from that again comes the value of their produce: accordingly, I preached up the sanitary improvement of stables. By comparing the profits derived from well-stalled, well-groomed beasts, with the meagre returns

from neglected animals, I changed, little by little, the management of all the cattle in the district: not a single beast continued to suffer. The cows and oxen were cleaned and rubbed down as they are in Switzerland, and in Auvergne. The sheepfolds, the stables, the cattle-pens, the dairies, the granaries, were remodelled after my own buildings and those of Monsieur Gravier, which are large and airy, and consequently wholesome. The farmers became apostles, and soon converted unbelievers by proving the soundness of my precepts through actual results. I lent money to those who were without it, — favoring, more especially, the industrious poor, for they served as a good example. By my advice, the defective, feeble, or inferior beasts were sold and replaced by fine specimens; so that our produce, after a time, carried the day over that of other districts in all the markets. Our flocks and herds were magnificent, therefore the hides were fine. This step in our progress was of great importance. In rural economy nothing is fruitless. Formerly our fleeces brought low prices, and our hides were of little value; but when their quality improved, tanners took advantage of the mountain torrent to build tan-mills, and the business grew rapidly.

“Good wine, an article formerly unknown in the village, where they drank only *piquette*, made of refuse grape-skins boiled in water, now became a necessity. Wine-shops were established. The first of them has lately been enlarged and changed into an inn, where mules are supplied to travellers, who are now beginning to take our road on their way to the Grande Chartreuse. For the last two years there has been enough business

stir to keep two inns going. At the beginning of our second era of prosperity the justice of peace died. Happily for us, his successor was a former notary of Grenoble, ruined by an unfortunate speculation, but who still had enough money to be rich in a village; Monsieur Gravier advised him to come here. He built himself a pretty house, and seconded my efforts by joining in them. He laid out a farm, and cleared the land, and to-day he has three *châteaux* on the mountain. His family is quite numerous. He got rid of the former clerk and sheriff, and replaced them by men who are much better educated, and, above all, much more industrious than their predecessors. The two new households have started a distillery of potatoes, and a wash-house for fleeces, both useful undertakings which the heads of these families superintend, while at the same time attending to their official duties.

“As soon as I had raised a revenue for the district, I employed it, without opposition, to build a town-hall, part of which I used for a free school, with lodging-rooms for the master. For that important function I chose an unfortunate sworn-in priest, cast off by the whole department, who found an asylum for his old age in our valley. The schoolmistress is an excellent woman, — so poor that she scarcely knew which way to turn; and we have thus helped her to a competence. She has lately opened a boarding-school for girls, where the well-to-do farmers are beginning to send their daughters.

“Monsieur, though I have the right to tell you the tale of this little corner of the earth in my own name, there is a point where Monsieur Janvier, the new curate,

a Fénelon reduced to the proportions of a parish-priest, has shared with me in the work of regeneration; he has been able to infuse a gentle and fraternal spirit into the manners and customs of the country side, so that the population seems now to be of one family. Monsieur Dufau, though he came later, also deserves the gratitude of the community.

"To sum up our present position by figures, which are more conclusive than any remarks of mine, the village now owns two hundred acres of woodland and one hundred and sixty acres of pasturage. In round numbers, it is able to pay the curate an additional salary of three hundred francs, two hundred to a *garde-champêtre*, and as much more to the master and the mistress of the free school; it has five hundred francs a year to keep the roads in order, and the same sum for repairing the town-hall, the parsonage, the church, and for other expenses. In fifteen years from now it will have a hundred thousand francs' worth of wood to cut down; and it can then pay its assessments without calling on the inhabitants for a farthing. By that time it will be one of the richest districts in France. But perhaps I am boring you with all this?" said Benassis, noticing the absorbed and thoughtful attitude of his listener, which might have been taken for inattention.

"Oh, no!" replied the captain.

"Monsieur," resumed the doctor, "all this trade, industry, agriculture, and consumption of produce was, after all, only local. Our prosperity stopped short at a certain point. To be sure, I applied to the authorities for a post-office, and licenses for the sale of tobacco, powder, and cards. I induced the collector of customs,

through the charms of this valley and our new social life, to leave the district where he had hitherto dwelt in preference to the capital of the department, and come to us. At the proper time and place I imported every commodity for which I had roused a need. I brought in new families, new industrials, and let them acquire property and the sense of proprietorship; thus, as soon as they had earned a little money, they cleared their land. Small farms and holdings spread over the mountain, and gradually made it valuable. The poor people whom I had once found carrying their cheeses on foot to Grenoble, were now driving their carts, laden with fruit, eggs, chickens, and turkeys, to market. All were unconsciously looking up in the world. Those who were the worst off had their gardens, their vegetables, and their fruits to cultivate; and—this being a sign of prosperity—none now baked their own bread, regarding it as a loss of time. Even the children were busy watching the sheep and cattle.

“But, monsieur, it was necessary to keep up the industrial impetus, and bring fresh fuel to its hearth. The village had as yet no perennial industry which could lead to commercial production, and so necessitate large transactions, an exchange, and a market. It is not enough for a community to lose none of the wealth it may possess, and which forms its capital. You cannot increase its well-being by merely making its money change hands within its own limits in the game of production and consumption, however skilfully you may play it. The solution of the problem is not to be found there. When a region of country is fully developed and its products balance its consumption, it must, so as

to create fresh prosperity and increase the public wealth, make exchanges with other markets, which will give it a steady commercial capital. This principle has always led the States that are without territorial basis, such as Tyre, Carthage, Venice, Holland, and England, to seize upon the commerce of transportation. I looked about me in our little sphere for some analogous opening, so as to bring about a third period of commercial activity. Our prosperity, which so far was scarcely apparent to a superficial eye, was to me alone truly astonishing. The inhabitants, who have insensibly grown into a populous community, have not been able to judge of the movement while participating in it.

“At the end of the seventh year I met with two foreigners, — the real benefactors of this village, which they will, perhaps, metamorphose into a town. One is a Tyrolese of remarkable cleverness, who makes shoes for the country-people, and boots for the fashionable society of Grenoble better than any Parisian workman can make them. He was a poor wandering musician, — one of those industrious Germans who turn their hand to anything, and can make the tool as well as the work, the music as well as the instrument. He chanced to stop at this village on his way from Italy, through which he had travelled, singing and working as he went. He asked if any one needed shoes. They sent him to me. I ordered two pairs of boots, for which he made the lasts. Surprised at his clever workmanship, I questioned him. I found him careful in his replies; his manners, his face, all confirmed the good opinion I was inclined to form of him. I proposed that he should take up his abode in the village, and I promised to

help his business to the best of my ability. In fact, I put quite a large sum of money at his disposal. He accepted. I had my own plans. Our hides were improved, and we should be able after a time to consume them ourselves, by making boots and shoes at moderate prices. I now prepared to renew the basket experiment on a large scale. Chance had thrown in my way a remarkably industrious and skilful workman ; and it was my duty to secure him, and give the village a permanent and productive trade. The demand for boots and shoes naturally never slackens ; and the manufacture is one whose least improvement is at once appreciated by the consumer. Fortunately, I was not mistaken, monsieur. We have to-day five tanneries ; they dress all the hides of the department, and are sometimes obliged to get their supply from Provence. Each of these tanneries has its own mill. Well, monsieur, even these tanneries cannot furnish all the leather my Tyrolese needs for his trade. At this moment he is employing forty workmen !

“The other man — the history of whose arrival is not less singular, but might seem tedious if I related it to you — is a common peasant who has found a way to make, at a lower price than is asked elsewhere, the broad-brimmed hats which are worn in this region of country. He now exports them into the neighboring departments, and even into Switzerland and Savoie. These two industries, both inexhaustible sources of prosperity, provided the district keeps up their quality and keeps down their price, suggested to me the idea of founding three yearly fairs. The prefect, amazed at our industrial progress, seconded my efforts to obtain

the royal order for their institution. Last year the three fairs were held for the first time ; and already they are called, even as far as Savoie, the Hat-and-Shoe fair.

"Hearing of these events, the head-clerk of a notary in Grenoble, a poor young man of education and a hard worker, to whom Mademoiselle Gravier is engaged, went to Paris and petitioned for the right to open a notary's office in the village ; his request was granted. As the practice cost him nothing, he was able to build himself a house opposite to that of the justice of the peace, on the public square of the new town. We now hold a weekly market, where quite a large business in cattle and wheat is done. Next year, an apothecary will probably settle here ; then a clockmaker, a furniture-dealer, a stationer, — in short, all those who supply the superfluities of life. We may end by taking on the airs of a little town and building middle-class houses. The education of ideas has so far advanced that I met with no opposition when I proposed in the common council to repair and decorate the church, to build a new parsonage-house, to mark off a fine fair-ground and plant it with trees, and lay out the village itself on a plan which should, at some future time, give us healthy, airy streets with frequent openings.

"This, monsieur, is how we have come to have nineteen hundred households instead of a hundred and thirty-seven ; three thousand horned cattle instead of eight hundred ; and, in place of seven hundred souls, a village population of over two thousand, — three thousand, counting the inhabitants of the whole valley. Within the district, we have twelve rich families, a hundred who are well-to-do, and two hundred who are prosper-

ing. The rest live by their labor. All know how to read and write; and we send seventeen subscriptions to different newspapers. You will still see many unfortunate persons among us; I do, indeed, see too many of them; but, at least, no one begs, and there is work for all. I tire two horses a day in attending to the sick; and I can now ride where I please, at all hours and without risk, round a radius of fifteen miles: if any one were to fire a shot at me he would not live five minutes. The silent affection of the inhabitants of this valley is all that I have personally gained by these changes, beyond the pleasure of hearing a contented people say, in joyous tones, as I pass them: — ‘Good-day, Monsieur Benassis.’ You will readily understand that the unsought profits which have come to me from my model farms are to me a means, and not a result.”

“If there were some man in every district to take pattern by you,” cried Genestas, with enthusiasm, “France would indeed be great, and able to snap its fingers at all Europe!”

“Ah, well! — I have kept you here too long,” said Benassis; “it is almost night. Let us go to dinner.”

The doctor’s house on the garden side has a façade with five windows to each story. There is a ground-floor, with one story above it, and a tiled roof with projecting dormer windows. Green blinds contrast with the gray tones of the wall, from end to end of which a grape-vine runs between the two tiers of windows, like a frieze. At the base of the wall, a few Bengal rose-bushes lead a melancholy life, — half-drowned at times by the rainfall from the roof, which has no gutter.

As you enter the house, by a large landing at the foot of the stairs which forms an antechamber, a *salon* with four windows, two on the courtyard and two on the garden, opens to the right. This room, doubtless the cause of much economy and the object of many hopes on the part of the deceased vicar, has a parquet floor, and a panelled wainscot, and is hung with tapestries of the seventeenth century. The large and small arm-chairs, covered with silk damask embroidered with flowers of another color, the gilded branch candlesticks of old date which ornamented the mantel-shelf, and the curtains with their heavy tassels, all proclaimed the opulence of the late curate. Benassis had supplemented the furniture, which was not without distinction, by two pier-tables of wood carved in wreaths, placed opposite to each other between the windows at both ends of the room, and by an old clock inlaid with brass, which decorated the chimney-piece. The doctor himself rarely used this *salon*, which exhaled the damp odor common to rooms that are always shut up. The deceased vicar still pervaded the atmosphere, and the peculiar smell of his tobacco seemed to issue from the corner of the fireplace where he had been in the habit of sitting. Two large sofas were symmetrically placed on either side of the hearth, where there had been no fire since Monsieur Gravier's visit until to-day, when it was bright with the clear flames of the pine-logs.

"The evenings are cold," said Benassis; "a fire looks cheerful."

Genestas, who had grown thoughtful, was beginning to understand the doctor's indifference to the every-day things of life.

"Monsieur," he said, "you have the true spirit of a citizen; I am surprised that after accomplishing so much you have not attempted to enlighten the government."

Benassis laughed, though gently, and with some sadness.

"Write a treatise on the best way of civilizing France — is that what you mean?" he said. "Monsieur Gravier has already suggested it. Alas! nothing enlightens a government; and of all governments the one least susceptible of enlightenment is the one that thinks itself created to shed light. No doubt what we have done for this district ought to be done by all other mayors; by the municipal officers for their cities, by the sub-prefects for their arrondissements, by the prefects for the departments, by the prime-minister for France, — each in his own sphere of action. Where I have taught my people to make a road five miles long, some might construct a great highway, others a canal. Just as I encouraged the manufacture of peasants' hats, a minister might release France from the industrial yoke of foreigners by encouraging clockmakers, and bringing to perfection our own iron and steel manufactures, our files and smelting-pots, and by the cultivation of silk and indigo. ~~X~~In the matter of commerce, encouragement does not mean protection. A nation's true policy is to relieve itself of paying tribute to other nations, but to do so without the humiliating assistance of custom-houses and prohibitory laws. Manufacturing industry depends solely on itself; competition is its life. Protect it, and it goes to sleep; it dies from monopoly as well as from the tariff. The nation that succeeds in making all other nations its vassals, will be the one

which first proclaims commercial liberty ; it will have enough manufacturing power to supply its productions at a cheaper price than those of its rivals. France can attain this result much better than England, for France alone has sufficient territory to maintain her agricultural products at prices which will keep down the rate of wages. The French government ought to bear this in mind ; it is, in fact, the whole question of modern politics. ~~X~~My dear sir, these questions have not been the object of my life : the tasks I have tardily taken up came to me accidentally.

“ Moreover, such things are too simple to be called a science ; they have nothing dazzling or theoretical about them ; they are so unlucky as to be merely useful. Besides, labor cannot be hurried. To attain success we must get up every morning with the same quantum of courage ; a courage which looks easy and yet is rare, the courage of a teacher, repeating day after day the same lesson, — the least rewarded of all forms of courage. We bow with respect before a man who, like you, has shed his blood upon a battle-field, but we sneer at other men who slowly consume the fire of their lives in saying over and over again the same thing to children of the same age. ~~X~~To do good in obscurity offers no temptation to any one. Civic virtue, which led the great men of former days to do service to the State, and made them willing to take the lowest rank if they could not have the highest, is lacking to our generation. ~~X~~The disease of the present day is superiority. There are more saints than niches ; and the reason is obvious. Losing the monarchy we lost honor ; losing the religion of our fathers we lost the Christian virtues ; and through

our fruitless attempts at government we have lost patriotism. Those principles, instead of inspiring the masses, no longer exist, — except, indeed, partially ; for ideas never die. To support society, there is in these days no other prop than selfishness. Individuals believe only in themselves. The future is man and his social existence ; we no longer see anything beyond that. The great man who shall save us from the shipwreck toward which we are hastening will doubtless make use of that spirit of individualism to reform the nation ; meantime, while awaiting such regeneration, we are in an age of self-interests and materialism. The latter word brands society. We are all ticketed, not according to what we are, but according to what we have. A man of energy in shirt-sleeves wins little or no recognition. This sort of estimate rules in the government. A minister sends a paltry medal to a sailor who saves a dozen lives at the peril of his own, but he bestows the cross of honor on a deputy who sells him a vote. Woe to the country thus constituted ! Nations, like individuals, derive their vigor from noble sentiments only. The sentiments of a people are their beliefs. In these days, instead of beliefs we have nothing but self-interests. If each man thinks only of himself, and puts faith in himself alone, where will you find civic courage ? — since the very condition of that virtue is the abnegation of self. Civic courage and military courage come from one and the same principle. You are called upon to give your life's blood at a moment's notice ; ours is poured out drop by drop. On either side, the same struggle under different forms. If we wish to civilize the humblest corner of the earth it is not enough to be

an honest or a virtuous man; we must be educated: but education, instruction, uprightness, patriotism, are nothing without will, — the firm will with which a man must detach himself from self-interest and consecrate his powers to a social thought. France can boast of more than one educated man, more than one patriot in each district; but I am certain there is not in every district a man who adds to those precious qualities a steady will, and a pertinacity like that of a blacksmith as he beats out his iron. The man who destroys and the man who builds up are equally the phenomena of will: one prepares, the other achieves the work; the first appears like the genius of evil, the second like the genius of good; to the one, glory; to the other, oblivion. Evil has a piercing voice which wakes the vulgar soul and fills it with admiration; good is long silent. Human self-love chooses the brilliant career. A work of peace, a humble work accomplished without self-seeking, can never be other than accidental, — at least, until education has changed the social principles of France. When these principles are changed, when we are all great citizens, shall we not become, in spite of the comfort of our easy lives, the most wearying and the most wearied, the least artistic, and the most unhappy people on the face of the earth? It does not concern me to answer these questions; I am not the head of the nation.

“Apart from these considerations, there are other difficulties which prevent the government from having fixed principles. Moreover, in the matter of civilization nothing is absolute. Ideas which suit one nation are dangerous to another; there are regions of intelligence, as there are of soil. If we have had many bad govern-

ments, it is because government, like taste, emanates originally from a very high and a very pure sentiment. Genius in this direction comes from a tendency of the soul, and not from a science. No one can really measure the acts or the thoughts of an administrator; his true judges are far removed from him; the results of his administration are farther still. Thus every one can style himself an administrator without running much risk. The species of seduction which intellect exercises in France inspires great respect for men of ideas; but ideas are worth little where only will is needed.

“ Besides, government does not consist in imposing ideas or methods more or less useful upon the masses, but in giving safe direction to the good or evil ideas of those masses, thus making them conduce to the general good. If the prejudices and fixed habits of a country lead to evil, the inhabitants will themselves abandon the errors. Do not all errors in rural, political, or domestic economy lead to losses which self-interests rectify in the long run? Here, in this district, I had the luck to find a *tabula rasa*. By my advice, the earth has been well cultivated; but there had been no previous mistakes in agriculture, and the soil was good; it was therefore easy for me to introduce cultivation with five successions of crops, grass, clover, and potatoes. My agricultural system rubbed against no prejudices. No worthless ploughshares were in use, as in some parts of France; here the hoe sufficed for the little tillage that was done. The wheelwright had an interest in crying up my wheel-ploughs, because they threw work in his way; thus he became my confederate. But in this, as in other things, I always sought to draw

the interests of the one within the interests of the many. Soon I advanced from productions which served the immediate wants of a poor community to other productions, which increased their comfort and well-being. I never drew in from the outer to the inner; and I only encouraged exportations which were certain to enrich the people,—the profits of which could be seen at a glance. The people who made them were my apostles, and spread my gospel by their own acts, and without being aware of it.

“Then there’s another consideration. Here we are, fourteen miles from Grenoble; and the vicinity of a great town offers many an opening for productions. All districts are not at the gates of a large city. In every effort like this of mine, we must consider the character of the region, its situation, its resources; we must study soil, men, and things, and beware of planting vines in Normandy. So, you see, nothing is more variable than the conditions of government; in fact, very few general principles can belong to it. Law is uniform; customs, soils, and intellects are not: government is the art of applying law without injury to interests; therefore, its working must be local. On the other side of the mountain at whose feet our deserted village lies, it is impossible to use wheel-ploughs, for there is no depth of earth; well, if the mayor of that district had tried to imitate our methods, he would have ruined his community. I advised him to make vineyards, and last year that little region had an excellent grape-harvest; he exchanges his wine for our wheat.

“And then, too, I have stood well with the people to whom I preached; we were always in close relations to

each other. I cured my peasantry of their ailments, — always easy to cure, for the chief point is to restore the natural strength by substantial food. *Country people, either from thrift or indigence, live so badly that their maladies come chiefly from their penury; as a general thing they are healthy. When I resolved, solemnly, to take up this life of obscure resignation, I hesitated long whether to make myself a curate, a country doctor, or a justice of the peace. It is not without reason, my dear monsieur, that the three black gowns, priest, lawyer, and doctor, are proverbially classed together; one stanches the wounds of the soul, another those of the purse, the third those of the body; they represent society in its three chief aspects of existence, — conscience, property, and health. *Formerly the first, subsequently the second, were the State itself. Those who preceded us on this earth thought, possibly with reason, that the priest — the guide of ideas — ought to be the sole governing power; he was king, pontiff, judge. But in those days all was faith and conscience. To-day, this is changed; and we must take our epoch for such as it is. Well, I think that the progress of civilization and the well-being of the masses depends on the three professions. They are the powers which directly lead the people to feel the result of actions, of interests, and of principles, — the three great results produced within a nation by events, by property, and by ideas. Time goes on, and brings changes; properties increase or diminish. All things must be ruled by such mutations; out of it comes the principle of order. To civilize communities, to create production, we must bring the masses to understand how it is that individual interests are one

with national interests, which resolve themselves into actions, interests, and principles. The three professions, handling, as they necessarily do, these human results, seem to be, in our day, the greatest levers of civilization; they alone offer constantly to the man of character an efficacious means of ameliorating the condition of the poorer classes, — with which they are in perpetual relation.

“The peasant, however, would rather listen to the man who prescribes for his body than to the priest who discourses on the salvation of his soul. The one can talk to him about the land he cultivates, the other is obliged to converse of heaven, about which he is in these days, unfortunately, little interested. I say unfortunately, for the doctrine of a future life is not only a consolation but a proper means of government. Is not religion the only power that can uphold social laws? France has recently vindicated God. When religion was done away with, the government was forced to set up the Terror to compel the enforcement of the laws; but it was only human terror, and it passed away.

“Well, monsieur, when a peasant is ill and nailed to a sick-bed, or convalescent, he is forced to listen to reason and argument; and he will understand both if presented clearly. That was the thought that made a doctor of me. I reckoned with my peasantry and for them; I gave them only such advice as would be certain in its effects, and would therefore constrain them to recognize the soundness of my views. With peasants, it is essential to be infallible. Infallibility was the making of Napoleon; it would have made a god of him if the universe had not resounded with his fall at

Waterloo. If Mohammed was able to create a religion after conquering a third of the globe, it was because he concealed from the world the spectacle of his death. To the village mayor and the great conqueror the same principle applies; the nation and the district are of the same flock, the breed is the same. I was rigorous towards those I was forced to help with money; if I had not shown firmness they would all have scoffed at me. Peasants, quite as often as men of the world, end by making light of those whom they cheat. To be duped is to be weak; strength governs all things. I have never demanded a penny of any one for my medical services, unless from those who are known to be rich; but I have left no one in ignorance of the proper price of them. I never give away medicines, unless the sick person is indigent. If my peasantry do not pay me, they at least know the amount of their debt; sometimes they ease their conscience by bringing me oats for my horses, or wheat, when it is not too dear. If the miller were to offer me only a few eels for my services, I should tell him he was generous for so trifling a matter. Such politeness bears fruits; in winter he will give me a few sacks of flour for the poor. Ah! monsieur, these people have hearts if we don't blight them. I have come to think more of good and less of evil than I used to."

"But you must have sorely taxed yourself?" said Genestas.

"I! not at all," answered Benassis. "It gave me no more trouble to say a useful thing than to talk nonsense. Meeting them as I did, talking and laughing with them, I was soon able to speak to them of themselves. At first, they did not listen to me. I had their

prejudices and repugnances to combat; I was a bourgeois, and to their minds a bourgeois was an enemy. That sort of enmity amused me. Between the doing of good and the doing of evil, there's but one difference,—a conscience at peace or the reverse; the trouble remains the same. If rascals chose to behave well, they would end by being millionnaires instead of being hanged; that's the whole of it—”

“Monsieur!” cried Jacquotte, “the dinner is getting cold.”

“Monsieur,” said Genestas, catching the doctor by the arm, “I have only one remark to offer on what I have just heard. I know nothing about the wars of Mohammed, and so I cannot judge of his military talents; but if you had seen the Emperor manœuvring the campaign in France you would have taken him for a god; and if he was vanquished at Waterloo, it was because he was more than man; he was too mighty for earth and the earth gave way under him,—that is how it was. In other respects I am heartily of your opinion in all things; and, thunder of heaven! the mother who bore you did n't waste her time.”

“Come!” said Benassis, smiling, “let us go to dinner.”

The dining-room was panelled throughout, and painted gray. The furniture consisted of a few straw chairs, a buffet, some cupboards, a stove, the famous clock of the deceased curate, and white curtains at the windows. The table, covered with a white cloth, bore no signs of luxury, and the crockery was of common earthenware. The soup, made after a recipe of the late master, was the strongest broth that ever a cook could simmer

and boil down. The doctor and his guest had hardly eaten it, when a man abruptly entered the kitchen, and in spite of Jacquotte, made a sudden irruption into the dining-room.

“Well, what is it?” asked the doctor.

“Why, it’s this, monsieur; our good woman, Madame Vigneau, has turned quite white, — so white that we are all frightened.”

“Well,” said Benassis, cheerfully, “then I shall have to go.”

He rose. In spite of the doctor’s remonstrances, Genestas, flinging down his napkin, swore in soldier fashion that he would not stay at table without his host, and returned to the *salon* to warm himself, thinking all the while of the wretchedness inevitably to be met with in every state of life to which man is subject here below.

Benassis soon returned, and the two friends once more sat down to table.

“Taboureau came to speak to you just now,” said Jacquotte to her master, bringing in the dishes which she had kept hot.

“Who is ill at his place?” asked the doctor.

“No one, monsieur; he wanted to consult you about his affairs, he said; he is coming back again.”

“Very good. This Taboureau,” resumed Benassis, addressing Genestas, “is to me a perfect treatise on philosophy. Study him attentively when he comes; he can’t fail to amuse you. He used to be a day-laborer, — a worthy man, thrifty, eating little, and working much. As soon as the fellow had a few crowns of his own, his intellect began to develop. He caught the

ideas that I was impressing on the district, and tried to profit by them for his own advantage. In eight years he has made a fortune, — really a large fortune in a community like this. Probably he is worth forty thousand francs. I'll give you twenty guesses as to how he made that money, and you will never find out. He is a usurer, — a thorough-going usurer; and his usury is so part and parcel of the interests of the people of this district that I should simply waste my time if I tried to undeceive them as to the advantages which they think they get from their dealings with him. When this devil of a fellow saw them all tilling their lands, he went to the adjoining districts and bought grain, to supply these poor people with the various kinds of seed they needed. Here, as elsewhere, the peasantry, and even some of the farmers, never have the cash to pay for their seeds. To some Master Taboureau lent a sack of barley, to be returned by a sack of rye after the harvest; to others a *setier*, that is, about nine bushels of wheat, to be repaid by a sack of flour. My man now carries on this singular sort of commerce all over the department. If nothing balks him, he is likely to make a million. Well, my dear monsieur, as a day-laborer Taboureau used to be a worthy fellow, good-natured, obliging, and willing to do a hand's turn for any one who asked him; but now, in proportion to his gains, Monsieur Taboureau has progressed and grown wrangling and insolent. The richer he becomes, the worse he gets. As soon as a peasant passes from a simple life of labor to an easy life, or to the ownership of landed property, he grows unbearable. He forms a class which is half-

virtuous, half-vicious, half-educated, half-ignorant, which will always be the despair of governments. You will see a little of the spirit of this class in Taboureau, — a simple-minded man to all appearance, even illiterate, but certainly deep and clever as regards his own interests."

The sound of a heavy step announced the approach of the usurer in grains.

"Come in, Taboureau!" cried Benassis.

Thus prepared by the doctor, the captain looked at the peasant, and saw a thin man, much bent, with a projecting forehead, and many wrinkles. The sunken face was pierced by a pair of small gray eyes touched with black. The usurer's lips were tightly closed, and the sharp chin was thrust up to meet a nose that was sarcastically hooked. His high cheek-bones showed the lines and cracks which denote a rambling life and the craftiness that comes of an illicit business. His hair was already turning gray. He wore a blue jacket that was quite clean, whose square pockets stuck out from both hips, and whose open front showed a white waistcoat with a flowery pattern. He planted himself squarely on his legs, leaning on a stick with a knobby end. A little spaniel followed him into the room, in defiance of Jacquotte, and lay down beside him.

"Well, what is it?" asked Benassis.

Taboureau looked suspiciously at the unknown personage who was sitting at the doctor's table, and said, —

"It is not a case of illness, monsieur le maire; but you know how to heal the wounds of the purse, as well as those of the body; and I've come to consult you

about a little difficulty I've had with a man at Saint-Laurent."

"Why don't you go to the justice of the peace, or his clerk?"

"Eh! because you are so much cleverer; and I'm more sure of my affair if I can get your approbation."

"My dear Taboureau, I am glad to give my medical advice, gratis, to the poor; but I shall not examine into the affairs of a man as rich as you are for nothing. It costs something to get hold of science."

Taboureau twisted his cap.

"If you want my advice, which will save you the coppers you would otherwise have to lay out in consulting the lawyers at Grenoble, you must send a sack of flour to the Martin woman who takes care of the children from the hospital."

"Well, to be sure, monsieur; I'll do that with pleasure, if you say it is necessary. Can I state my business without disturbing monsieur?" he added, giving a glance at Genestas. "Well, then, monsieur," he resumed, at a nod from the doctor, "two months ago, a man from Saint-Laurent came to see me. 'Taboureau,' he said, 'could you sell me twelve hundred and fifty bushels of barley?' 'Why not?' I answered, 'that's my business; do you want them at once?' 'No,' he said, 'early in March, for the spring-sowing.' 'Very good,' I said. Then we set about discussing the price; and having drunk his glass, he agreed to pay me the then market price for barley in Grenoble, and I was to deliver the grain in March, — less the storage waste, of course. But, my dear monsieur, barleys have gone up and up, till they've boiled over like a

kettle o' milk. Being pressed for money, I've sold all my barley — natural enough, was n't it, monsieur?"

"No," said Benassis; "that barley was no longer yours; it was left in your care. If barley had gone down in value, would n't you have compelled your purchaser to pay the price he had agreed upon?"

"But, monsieur, perhaps he would n't have paid it; we must swim with the stream, you know. A merchant ought to make his profit when he can. After all, goods are not yours till you've paid for them; is n't that true, monsieur l'officier? — for I see plainly that you have served in the army."

"Taboureau," said Benassis gravely, "misfortunes will overtake you. Sooner or later, God punishes evil actions. How can so intelligent and capable a man as you, a man who knows exactly what he is about, set such an example of dishonesty to this district? If you carry on such proceedings, how do you expect the poor folks to keep honest, and not rob you in return? Your workmen will filch part of the time they owe you, and that will demoralize others. You are wrong. That barley was as good as delivered. If the man from Saint-Laurent had carried it away you could n't have got it back. You therefore sold something that did not belong to you. The barley, by the terms of your agreement, had already been converted into money. But go on."

Genestas threw a glance of intelligence at the doctor to make him observe the man's immovability. Not a fibre of his face quivered at the reprimand, his brow had not flushed, his small eyes were calm.

"Listen to me, Taboureau. Deliver that barley at

once, or you will lose the respect of everybody. Even if your pockets gain by such conduct, you will be held up as a man without faith or decency, without honesty, without honor — ”

“Go on, don’t be afraid; tell me I’m a knave, a rascal, a thief. They say those things in business, monsieur le maire, without offence. In business, don’t you see, every man’s for himself.”

“Well, then, why do you voluntarily put yourself in a position to deserve such terms?”

“But, monsieur, if the law is on my side — ”

“The law is not on your side.”

“Are you sure of that, monsieur, — sure, quite sure? It’s an important matter, don’t you see.”

“Of course I am sure. If I were not at dinner, I would read you the Code. If you go to law about it you will lose your case; and you will never set foot within my doors again. I will not receive persons I don’t respect. Do you hear me? you will lose your case.”

“Nay, nay, monsieur; I sha’n’t lose it,” said Taboureau. “Look here, monsieur le maire, it’s the Saint-Laurent man that owes me the barley; it’s I who bought it from him; and it’s he who won’t deliver it. I wanted to be quite certain that I should win the case before I went to the sheriff and involved myself in costs.”

Genestas and the doctor looked at each other, trying to hide their surprise at the clever trick of the man to get at the judicial truth of the matter.

“Well, Taboureau, your man keeps bad faith, and you had better not deal with such persons.”

"Ah, monsieur! but they understand business."

"Good-day to you, Taboureau."

"Your servant, monsieur le maire, and company."

"Well," said Benassis, when the usurer had disappeared, "don't you believe that in Paris a man like that would soon be a millionaire?"

Dinner over, the doctor and his guest returned to the *salon*, where they talked for the rest of the evening on war and politics, in the course of which conversation Genestas manifested the most violent antipathy to Englishmen.

"Monsieur," said his host, "may I know whom I have the honor to receive as my guest?"

"My name is Pierre Bluteau," answered Genestas. "I am a captain at Grenoble."

"Very good, monsieur. Do you wish to follow the same system as Monsieur Gravier? He liked, after breakfast, to accompany me on my rounds through the neighborhood. I am not sure that you will take much interest in the matters which occupy me, for they are very commonplace; you are neither the owner of property nor the mayor of a village, and you will see nothing in this district that you have not seen elsewhere, — all cottages look alike. However, you will get the air, and it gives an object to your ride —"

"Nothing could please me better than your proposal. I feared to make it myself lest you should think me troublesome."

Captain Genestas — to whom we shall continue to give his own name instead of his crafty alias — was ushered by his host into a bedroom on the second floor, over the *salon*.

"Good!" exclaimed Benassis; "Jacquotte has lighted your fire. If there is anything you want, the bell-rope is close to the bed's head."

"I don't believe I shall want anything," said Genestas. "Here is even a boot-jack. One needs to be an old trooper to know the value of that article. In war-times, monsieur, I've known it happen that one would almost burn down a house to get at a boot-jack. After a long march, and specially after an engagement, the feet swell so in the damp leather that no effort can get the boots off. I have had to sleep more than once with my boots on."

The captain looked with some surprise about the room, which was commodious, neat, and even handsome. "What luxury!" he said. "I suppose you are as well lodged?"

"Come and see," said the doctor. "I am your neighbor; we are only separated by the staircase."

Genestas was a good deal surprised, on entering the doctor's quarters, to see a bare room, whose walls had no other decoration than an old yellowish paper with brown spots, discolored in places. The bed—of iron coarsely varnished, and surmounted by a wooden pole from which fell a pair of gray cotton curtains, at the side of which lay a shabby strip of threadbare carpet—resembled a hospital bed. At its head stood one of those night-tables with four legs, whose rolling front opens or shuts with a noise like that of castanets. Three chairs, two armchairs made of straw, a chest of drawers in walnut-wood, on which stood a very ancient basin and a water-pitcher, the cover of the latter being held to it by a leaden hinge, completed the furniture. The

hearth of the fireplace was cold ; and all the doctor's shaving-things were scattered on the painted stone mantel-shelf, under an old mirror, which was hanging by a bit of twine. The tiled floor, neatly swept, was worn and cracked and hollowed in several places. Gray cotton curtains, with green fringes, hung at the two windows. Everything, even to the round table on which straggled a few papers, an inkstand, and some pens, — everything in this abode of simplicity, to which the excessive neatness of Jacquotte bestowed a sort of correction, gave the idea of a life that was half monastic, indifferent to things, yet full of feelings. An open door enabled the captain to look into a study where the doctor, no doubt, seldom sat. This room was in much the same state as the bedroom. A few dusty books lay sparsely scattered about the dusty shelves, while rows of bottles and labelled phials suggested that pharmacy occupied more space there than science.

“ You will ask me why there is such a difference between your room and mine,” said Benassis. “ Well, I have always felt ashamed of those who put their guests to sleep in a garret, and give them such disfiguring looking-glasses that when a man looks at himself he seems either larger or smaller than nature, either pallid and sickly or struck with apoplexy. We ought to try to make a friend's transient apartment as agreeable as possible ; don't you think so ? Hospitality seems to me as much a happiness and luxury as it is a virtue ; but under whatever aspect you consider it, not excepting that of its being a speculation, ought we not to display for friend and guest all the little caresses, the little

cajoleries of life? To your room, therefore, belong the handsome pieces of furniture, the warm carpet, the curtains, the clock, the candelabra, and the night-lamp; you must have the wax candles, and Jacquotte's best attentions; doubtless she has already brought you the new slippers, some milk, and a warming-pan. I hope you have never been more comfortably seated than you will be in the luxurious armchair, discovered I don't know where by the late curate. One thing is certain; if we wish to find patterns of all that is good, and beautiful, and convenient we must have recourse to the Church. I hope that everything in your room will please you. You will find some capital razors and good soap, and all the little accessories which make home-life so pleasant. But, my dear Monsieur Bluteau, if my theories of hospitality do not fully explain the difference between your room and mine, you will understand the nakedness of my quarters and the untidiness of my study to-morrow, when you witness the incessant coming and going which takes place in my house. In the first place, my life is not home-keeping; I am always out. When I am in the house, the peasantry come to see me at all hours, and I belong to them, body, soul, and chamber. Could I burden myself with the vexations of etiquette, or with those caused by the inevitable havoc those worthy people would involuntarily make among my things? Luxury is only suitable in mansions, castles, boudoirs, and the chambers of our friends. Indeed, I am only in the house to sleep, and therefore, what do I want with the trappings of wealth? You don't know how indifferent I am to the things of life."

They bade each other a friendly good-night, and shook hands cordially as they parted. Before he slept, the captain made more than one reflection upon this man, who, hour by hour, was increasing in proportions to his mind.

CHAPTER II.

O'ER HILL AND DALE.

THE friendship that every horseman feels for his steed led Genestas early to the stable ; and he was well pleased with the grooming Nicolle had bestowed upon his horse.

"Up already, Captain Bluteau?" cried Benassis, who came to meet his guest. "You are a true soldier, and hear reveille wherever you go, even in a village."

"Are you well?" answered Genestas, stretching out his hand with a friendly motion.

"I am never positively well," answered Benassis, in a tone that was half-sad, half-merry.

"Has monsieur slept well?" said Jacquotte to Genestas.

"Faith, my beauty ! you made my bed as if for a bride."

Jacquotte smiled as she followed her master and the captain. After seeing them at table, she remarked to Nicolle, —

"He's a good fellow, all the same, that officer."

"I should think so !" said Nicolle, "he has given me forty sous, already."

"We will begin by visiting two death-beds," said Benassis to his guest, as they left the dining-room.

"Though doctors are not usually fond of coming face

to face with their victims, so-called, I shall take you to two houses where you will be able to make a rather curious observation on human nature. You will there see two scenes which will prove to you how much a people living on the mountains differ in the expression of their feelings from the dwellers on a plain. That portion of our district which lies on the upper slopes and summits preserves customs of an antique type, which vaguely recall the scenes of the Bible. There is, along this whole chain of mountains, a distinct line traced by nature, above which the aspect of everything changes. Above, is strength; below, cleverness and dexterity; above, noble sentiments; below, a perpetual recollection of the material interests of life. Except the valley of Ajou, where the northern slopes are peopled with idiots and the southern with an intelligent race, — two distinct populations separated only by a rivulet, yet dissimilar at all points, stature, carriage, physiognomy, manners, customs, and occupations, — I have never seen these differences more marked than they are here. This fact ought to compel all administrators of government to study locally the application of the laws. "But the horses are ready, let us start."

In a short time the riders reached a house which stood in a part of the village that faced the mountains of the Grande Chartreuse. At the door of this house, whose general appearance was tolerably neat, they saw a coffin covered with black cloth, placed on two chairs surrounded by four wax tapers; and near by, on a stool, a copper vessel filled with holy-water, in which lay a branch of box. Each person who entered the courtyard knelt beside the body, said a Pater, and

sprinkled a few drops of holy-water upon the bier. Above the black cloth rose the green tufts of a jasmine which grew beside the entrance; and over the moulding of the doorway ran the tortuous shoots of a grape-vine, already in leaf. A young girl was sweeping the path before the house in obedience to that vague desire for adornment which all ceremonies, even the most mournful, impart. The eldest son of the deceased, a young peasant twenty-two years of age, was leaning motionless against the casing of the doorway. His eyes were full of tears that did not fall, or perhaps he wiped them furtively away from time to time. At the moment when Benassis and Genestas entered the courtyard, having fastened their horses to one of the poplars which stood outside the little wall, breast-high, above which they had taken note of the scene within, the widow was coming out of a cattle-shed, followed by a woman who carried a jug of milk.

"Take courage, my good Pelletier," said the latter.

"Ah, my good woman," replied the widow, "when one has lived twenty-five years with a man, it is very hard to part with him!" and her eyes filled with tears. "Are you going to pay me the two sous?" she added after a pause, holding out her hand.

"To be sure! I forgot," said the other woman, taking out the money. "Well, console yourself, neighbor. — Ah! here is Monsieur Benassis!"

"Well, poor mother; are you better?" asked the doctor.

"As for that, my dear monsieur," she said, crying, "one has to keep about all the same. I say to myself that my man won't suffer any more, — and he did suffer

so! But walk in, gentlemen. Jacques! put chairs for the gentlemen; come! stir yourself. Bless me! you won't bring your father back to life if you stand there a hundred years! You have got to do double work now."

"No, no, my good woman," said Benassis, "let your son be quiet; we don't intend to sit down. You have a lad there who will take care of you, and who is well able to replace his father."

"Go and get dressed, Jacques," cried the widow; "they'll be here to fetch you before long."

"Well, good-by, mother," said Benassis.

"Gentlemen, your servant," she replied.

"Here you see death," said the doctor to Genestas, as they rode away, "taken as an expected event, which does not interfere with the ordinary life of the family. The people do not even wear mourning; in the villages, either from poverty or thrift, they will not go to that expense. Throughout these valleys mourning is never worn. Now, the wearing of mourning is neither a custom nor a law; it is something better, — it is an institution derived from all laws whose enforcement depends on the one principle — morality. Well, in spite of our efforts, neither Monsieur Janvier nor I have been able to make our peasantry understand of what importance such outward observances are to the maintenance of social order. These worthy folks, so lately emancipated from their old thraldoms, are not quick to seize the new ties which ought to bind them to these public principles. So far, they have got no further than the rudimentary ideas which lead to order and physical well-being. Later, if any one continues my work, they

will come to understand principles which help to preserve the rights of all. It is not enough to be an upright man, we must be seen to be one. Society does not exist on moral ideas only; to last, it requires actions that are in harmony with such ideas. In most of the rural districts, out of every hundred families whom death deprives of their head, only a few, gifted with lively sensibility, preserve a remembrance of the dead for any length of time; the others totally forget them before the end of the year. Is not such forgetfulness a sore thing? Religion is the heart of a people; it is the expression of their feelings, which it raises by giving them an object. Without a God visibly worshipped, religion would not exist, and human laws would have little real vigor. Though the conscience belongs to God alone, the body falls under the social law; therefore, is it not the beginning of atheism to efface the outward signs of religious grief, and not to exhibit forcibly to the eyes of children who cannot yet reflect — indeed, to the eyes of all who learn by example — the duty of obeying laws by a visible submission to the decrees of Providence, who afflicts and consoles, and gives and takes away the blessings of life?

“I confess that having passed through my period of scoffing and of scepticism, I have, here in this place, learned to understand the value of religious ceremonies, of family solemnities, and the importance of certain usages and celebrations around the domestic hearth. The base of all society must always be the family. There, where law and power take their rise, obedience should be taught. Seen in all their consequences, the family bond and paternal authority are two principles

which are still too little developed in our new legislative system. The family, the district, and the department represent our whole country. Laws should therefore be based on those three great divisions. In my opinion, the marriage of men and women, the birth of children, the death of fathers, cannot be surrounded with too many observances. That which makes the strength of Catholicism, that which has rooted it so firmly in the manners and morals of the people, is precisely the splendor by which it associates itself with the solemn things of life, and surrounds them with ceremonies, so simple and appealing, yet so grand whenever the priest rises to the height of his mission, and makes his office accord with the sublimity of Christian morality. Formerly I used to think the Catholic religion a mass of bigotry and superstition, cleverly manipulated, which an intelligent civilization ought to bring to justice; here, in this village, I have come to recognize both its political necessity and its moral usefulness; here I have understood its power as expressed in the very name it bears. Religion means *bond*; and surely worship — in other words, the expression of religion — constitutes the sole tie that can bind the social elements and give them a lasting form. Here, too, I have found the balm which religion pours into the wounds of life: without discussing the matter, I feel how admirably it harmonizes with the passionate nature and manners of the southern peoples.

“Take the other road,” said the doctor, interrupting himself; “we are making for the upland. There we shall overlook two valleys, and you will have a fine view. At a height of three thousand feet above the

Mediterranean we shall see both Dauphiné and Savoie, the mountains of Lyonnais, and the Rhone. We shall enter another district, a mountainous one, where you will see, at a farmhouse owned by Monsieur Gravier, the second scene that I spoke of, — certain local ceremonies which realize my idea of what is due to the great events of life. In this district mourning is religiously worn. The poor will even beg the means to buy black clothing; and, under the circumstances, no one ever refuses to help them. A widow refers to her loss nearly every day, and always with tears; ten years after her misfortune her feelings are as deep as on the morrow of the death. Manners and customs are patriarchal; the authority of the father is unlimited, — his word is law. He eats alone, seated at the upper end of the table; his wife and his children wait upon him, and those around never address him without using certain formulas of respect. Such customs are, to my mind, a noble education. The result is that in this district the inhabitants are, as a general thing, upright, thrifty, and industrious. Every father of a family is in the habit of dividing his property equally among his children when old age renders him unfit for labor; his children then support him. In the last century, an old man, ninety years of age, after making this division among his four children, spent three months of every year with each of them. When he left the eldest to go to the youngest, a friend said to him, 'Well, are you satisfied?' 'Yes, truly,' replied the old man; 'they treat me as if I were their child.' That saying seemed so remarkable to an officer named Vauvenargues, a celebrated moralist then in garrison at Grenoble, that he repeated it in the

salons of Paris, where the touching words were heard and afterwards published by a writer named Chamfort. In this district we often hear sayings that are even more striking, but they lack historians able to repeat them."

"I have seen the Moravian brotherhoods, and the Lollards of Bohemia and Hungary," said Genestas; "they are Christians who bear some resemblance to your mountaineers. Those worthy souls endure the miseries of war with the patience of angels."

"Monsieur," replied the doctor, "simple manners and customs must be nearly alike in all parts of the world. Truth has but one aspect. A country life may kill ideas, but it also weakens vice and develops virtue. In fact, the less men congregate together, the fewer the crimes, the misdemeanors, the evil feelings we encounter. The purity of the air has much to do with the innocence of morals."

The two horsemen, who were riding at a foot-pace along a stony road, now reached the upland of which Benassis had spoken. This tract of ground turns round the edge of a high peak of bare rock which overtops it, and on which there is not a vestige of vegetation. The summit is gray, cleft on all sides, abrupt and inaccessible; the fertile upland, hemmed in by rocks, stretches below this peak and forms an irregular terrace of about thirty acres in breadth. Towards the south, the eye takes in, through a wide notch, the French Maurienne, Dauphiné, the crags of Savoie, and the mountains of Lyonnais. As Genestas gazed at the view, just then illuminated by the sunshine of a spring morning, cries of lamentation reached his ear.

"Come," said Benassis, "the Wail has begun.¹ Wail is the name they give to this part of the funeral ceremonies."

The soldier then perceived, on the western flank of the precipice, a large farm which forms a square enclosure. The arched gateway of granite has an air of grandeur which the decay of its structure, the age of the trees that surround it, and the plants which grow in its clefts, only enhance. The house itself is at the farther end of the courtyard, on each side of which are barns, sheepfolds, stables, cattle-sheds and carriage-houses; in the centre is a large pool where the manure lies rotting. This yard, whose aspect in rich and populous farms is usually so animated, was now silent and gloomy. The door of the poultry-yard was closed; all the animals were shut up in their own quarters, whence their cries were scarcely heard. The stables and the sheds were carefully closed. The path leading to the house had been swept. Such perfect order where disorder usually reigned, the lack of life and movement in so noisy a place, the calm of the mountain, the shadow cast from the summit of the peak, all contributed to affect the soul. Though Genestas was accustomed to strong impressions, he was unable to restrain a shudder when he saw a dozen men and women ranged on either side the door of the great hall, crying aloud with terrible unanimity of intonation, "THE MASTER IS DEAD!"—repeating it twice during the time it took him to walk from the gateway to the house. When the cry ceased, loud moans came from the interior, and the voice of a woman was heard through the windows.

¹ *Le Chant est commencé.*

"I dare not intrude upon such grief," said Genestas to the doctor.

"I always visit the afflicted," answered Benassis; "partly to see that no bad effects are caused by grief, and partly to give a certificate of the death: you can accompany me without scruple. Besides, the scene is so imposing and we shall find so many persons present, that you will not be noticed."

As Genestas followed the doctor, he saw that the first room was full of family relations. The two men passed through this assemblage and placed themselves near the door of a bedroom, which opened into a great hall that served as kitchen and living-room for the family, or we might rather say, colony; for the length of the table indicated the habitual presence of about forty persons. The arrival of Benassis interrupted the discourse of a woman of tall stature, plainly dressed, whose hair was dishevelled, and who held, with an eloquent gesture, the hand of the dead man clasped within her own. The latter, dressed in his best clothes, lay rigid on his bed, the curtains of which had been drawn back. The calm face, which told of heaven, and above all, the silvery hair, produced a scenic effect. On either side of the bed stood the children and the nearest relations of the married pair. Each side of the family kept its own place, — the relations of the wife to the left, those of the husband to the right. Men and women were on their knees and praying; most of them were weeping. Wax tapers surrounded the bed. The curate of the parish and his clergy had taken their station in the middle of the chamber beside an empty bier. It was a tragic sight to see the head of the family in presence

of the open coffin which was about to close on him forever.

"Ah! my dear lord," said the widow, pointing to the doctor, "if the science of that good man could not save thee, it was written above that thou shouldst precede me to the grave! Yes, this hand is cold that once pressed mine in friendship. I have lost, forever, my dear companion; and our house has lost its precious head; for thou wert indeed our guide! Alas! all those who mourn with me have known the light of thine heart and the worth of thy presence; but I alone knew thy gentleness, thy patience! Oh, my husband! my man! must I bid thee farewell — farewell to thee our prop, to thee my good master? We, thy children, — for thou hast cherished all alike, — we have lost our father!"

The widow threw herself upon the body, clasped it in her arms, bathed it with tears, warmed it with kisses, and while she did so the serving-folk cried out, —

"OUR MASTER IS DEAD!"

"Yes," resumed the widow, "he is dead. The well-beloved man who gave us our daily bread, who planted and garnered for us, who watched for our happiness, who led us through life with an authority that was full of gentleness — he is dead! I may say it now in his presence, he never gave me a moment's grief; he was good, and strong, and patient; when we tortured him to restore his precious health, the dear lamb said to us, 'Leave me in peace, my children; all is useless,' in the self-same voice with which he had said, a few days earlier, 'All is well with me, my friends.' Yes, great God! a few days have sufficed to take away from us the

joy of our home; to darken our lives by closing the eyes of the best of men, the most upright, the most venerated of men, — a man who had not his equal at the plough; who went fearlessly, by night and by day, upon the mountains, and returned always with a smile for his wife and children. He was the loved of all. When he was absent, our hearth was sad; we had no appetite to eat. Alas! how will it be with us when our guardian angel is under ground, and we see him no more? — no more, my friends! no more, my good relations! no more, my children! Yes, my children have lost their good father; our relations have lost their good relation; my friends have lost a good friend; and I have lost my all, for the house has lost its master!”

She took the hand of the dead, knelt down, the better to lay her face to his, and kissed him. The serving-people cried aloud three times, —

“THE MASTER IS DEAD!”

At that moment the eldest son approached his mother, and said, —

“My mother, the people from Saint-Laurent are approaching; they will want wine.”

“My son,” she answered in a low voice, quitting the solemn and grievous tone in which she had given utterance to her feelings, “take the keys; from henceforth you are master here. See that all shall find a welcome such as your father would have given; for them let nothing seem changed.”

“Would that I could see thee once again, my noble man,” she resumed. “Alas! thou canst not feel me; I cannot warm thee! All that I now desire is to comfort thee, and make thee know that while I live thou

shalt dwell in the heart thou hast rendered happy ; that thy dear remembrance shall abide forever in this chamber. Yes, it shall be full of thee so long as God shall leave me here. Hear me, dear man ! I swear to keep thy bed such as it is to-day ; never did I enter it without thee ; cold and empty it shall remain. In losing thee I have lost all that makes the life of woman, — master, husband, father, companion, friend, man — all ! ”

“ THE MASTER IS DEAD ! ” wailed the servants.

While the cry was caught up and echoed, the widow took scissors that were hanging at her girdle, and cut off her hair, which she placed in the hand of her husband. Silence fell on all.

“ That act,” said Benassis, “ signifies that she will not remarry ; many of her relations expected her resolution.”

“ Take it, my master,” she said, with a transport of heart and voice that stirred all present. “ Keep, in the tomb, the faith that I have pledged thee. Thus we shall be one forever ; and I will dwell among thy children, and love the offspring which kept thy spirit young. Pray God thou mayst hear me, my man, my only treasure, and learn that thou canst make me live ; thou, dead, canst make me live to be obedient to thy sacred will, and to honor thy memory ! ”

Benassis pressed the soldier’s hand to invite him to follow him, and they went out. The first hall was full of persons who had come from another district among the mountains. All were silent and absorbed, as if the sorrow and mourning which hovered above the dwelling had already seized upon their own lives. As Benassis

and the captain crossed the threshold, they heard one of the new-comers say to the sons of the deceased, —

“When did he die?”

“Ah!” cried the eldest, who was a man about twenty-five years of age, “I did not see him die. He called me, and I was not there!” Sobs choked his words, but he continued: “The night before, he said to me, ‘Boy, go to the village and pay our taxes; my funeral ceremonies may hinder you from thinking of them; we might be tardy in paying them, and that has never happened.’ He seemed better, and I went. During my absence he died, and I received no last embrace. In his dying moments he did not see me at his side, as I had ever been!”

“THE MASTER IS DEAD!” cried all the people.

“Alas! he is dead; and I received neither his last glance nor his last sigh. Why think of taxes? Was it not better to lose our money than to have left the house? Could our whole fortune pay me for that last farewell? No; my God! If thy father be ill, never leave him, Jean; you will lay up remorse that may last your lifetime.”

“My friend,” said Genestas to the young man, “I have seen thousands of men die on the battlefields, and death never waited for their sons to come and bid them farewell. Take comfort; you are not the only one.”

“A father, monsieur!” he answered, bursting into tears. “A father, who was so good a man!”

“This funeral oration,” said Benassis, as he led the captain towards the farm-buildings, “will last until the body is placed in the coffin, and during all that time the language of the desolate woman will increase in

strength and imagery. But to speak thus before that imposing assembly, a woman must have earned the right to do so by a spotless life. If the widow could be reproached with the least wrong-doing, she would not dare to utter a word: otherwise, she would condemn herself, and be at once her own accuser and her judge. Such a custom, which judges both the living and the dead, is sublime, is it not? They will put on their mourning eight days hence, before the last general meeting. Meantime, the family relations will remain with the widow and children to help them to arrange their affairs, and to offer consolation. This assemblage of friends has a great influence on the minds of all; it represses evil passions by that natural human respect which takes hold of men when they are in presence of one another. On the day when the mourning garments are first put on, a solemn repast is prepared, at which all the relations are present, and bid each other farewell. All is done gravely; and any one who failed in the duties imposed by the death of the head of his family would have no one present at his own Wail."

At this moment the doctor, who was near the cattle-shed, opened the door, and made the soldier enter, wishing to show it to him.

"See, captain," he said, "all our cattle-sheds have been rebuilt on this plan. Is it not fine?"

Genestas could not help admiring the vast area where the cows and oxen were ranged in two lines; their tails towards the lateral walls, their heads facing the middle of the building, into which they entered by a rather wide alley between their stalls and each outer wall. The open mangers gave to view their horned

heads and their brilliant eyes. A master could thus run his eye with ease over all his cattle. The fodder, which was placed under the rafters, where a sort of floor had been constructed, was thrown from thence, without labor or waste, into the racks. Between the two rows of mangers was a wide paved space, clean, and well ventilated by a current of air.

"During the winter," remarked Benassis, walking with Genestas to the centre of the stable, "the *veillées* — that is, the evening gatherings and occupations — are carried on in this place. Here the work-tables are set, and everybody is kept warm at no cost. The sheepfolds are built on the same plan. You have no idea how readily all animals adapt themselves to a system. I often admire them as they file into the stables. Each knows its station, and makes way for those who should pass first. See, there is room between the animals and the outer wall to either milk them or rub them down. The floor inclines enough to let the water run off easily."

"This cattle-shed enables me to judge of all the rest," said Genestas. "Without meaning to flatter you, you have indeed got fine results."

"Not obtained without trouble," answered Benassis. "But see what beasts!"

"They are certainly magnificent, and you have good reason to boast of them."

"Now," resumed the doctor, when they had passed through the gateway and mounted their horses, "we will ride across our newly cleared ground and by some wheat-fields, — a little corner of my district which I call 'La Beauce.'"

The two horsemen rode for an hour over hill and dale, and among the fields, on the cultivation of which the soldier complimented the physician. Then they regained the village boundaries, and followed the mountain-road, sometimes silent, sometimes conversing, according as the pace of their steeds allowed them to speak or compelled them to keep silence.

"I promised yesterday," said Benassis, as they entered a little gorge by which they were to issue into the wide valley, "to show you one of our soldiers who came back from the army after the fall of Napoleon. If I am not mistaken, we shall find him a few steps farther on, digging out a sort of natural reservoir, where the water from the mountain collects and which the silt is apt to choke with its deposits. But to make the man interesting, I must tell you the story of his life. He is named Gondrin, and was taken by the draft of 1792, when eighteen years of age, and put in the artillery. As a common soldier, he went through all the Italian campaigns under Napoleon, followed him to Egypt, returned to France after the peace of Amiens, was then enrolled among the pontoniers of the Guard, served steadily in Germany, and, for a final service, the poor laborer went to Russia."

"Then we are brothers-in-arms, as it were," said Genestas. "I went through the same campaigns. Men had to be made of iron to resist the changes and caprices of all those climates. Upon my word, the good God must have given a special lease of life to those who are still on their pins after marching over Italy, Egypt, Germany, Portugal, and Russia."

"Well, you'll see the remnants of such a man. You

know all about the retreat, — useless therefore to tell you. My fellow was a pontonier at the passage of the Beresina. He helped to construct the bridge over which the army passed ; and in order to plant the first props, he went into the water up to his middle. General Éblé, who had the pontoniers in his command, could find only forty-two who had grit enough, as Gondrin says, to attempt the work. The general himself got into the water to encourage and support them, and he promised each man an extra pension of a thousand francs and the cross of the Legion of honor. The first man who entered the Beresina had his leg taken off by a block of ice, and the man followed his leg. But you will understand the difficulties of the undertaking by the results. Of the forty-two pontoniers, Gondrin is the only one alive at this day. Thirty-nine perished in the Beresina, and two others died miserably in a Polish hospital. Our poor fellow did not get back from Wilna till 1814, after the return of the Bourbons. General Éblé, of whom Gondrin can't speak without tears in his eyes, was dead. The old pontonier, then deaf and infirm, and unable to read or write, could find no other protector or defender. He begged his way to Paris, and made efforts at the War office to obtain, not the promised pension of a thousand francs, not the cross of the Legion of honor, — merely the retiring pension to which he was entitled after twenty-two years' service and I can't tell you how many campaigns. In vain ; he could get neither back-pay nor the costs of his journey homeward, nor his pension. After a year of useless petitioning, during which he implored the help of those whose lives he had helped to save, the old man came back

here, broken down but resigned. This unrecognized hero now digs ditches at ten sous a fathom. Accustomed to work in swamps, he undertakes, as he says, the work which no other man is willing to do. By draining bogs, and cutting trenches through inundated lands, he earns, perhaps, three francs a day. His deafness gives a sad expression to his face. He is naturally no talker, but he is full of soul. He and I are good friends; he dines with me on the anniversaries of the battle of Austerlitz, the Emperor's fête-day, and the disasters at Waterloo; and I always present him at dessert with a napoleon, which pays for his quarterly allowance of wine. The feelings of respect which I have for that man are shared by the whole community, who would willingly support him. If he works, it is from self-respect. In every house where he is known the people follow my example and invite him to dinner. I could not make him take my twenty-franc piece if it were not given as a portrait of the Emperor. The injustice he has met with has wounded him deeply, but he grieves more over the loss of his cross than over that of his pension. When General Éblé presented the surviving pontoniers to the Emperor after the bridge was built, Napoleon kissed our poor Gondrin, who might now be dead but for the glory of that embrace. He lives in the remembrance of it, and in the hope of Napoleon's return. Nothing could convince him that the Emperor is dead; he is persuaded that his captivity is due to Englishmen, and I believe that on the slightest pretext he would kill even the best of those rich aldermen who are now travelling for their pleasure through France."

"Come, let us get on!" cried Genestas, rousing him-

self from the deep attention with which he had been listening to the doctor. "I wish to see that man."

And the two riders put their horses to a quick trot.

"The second soldier of whom I spoke to you," said Benassis, "is still another of those men of iron who make up our armies. He has lived, as all French soldiers do, amid shot and wounds and victories. He has suffered much and worn no epaulets but the woollen ones. His nature is jovial; he loves Napoleon to fanaticism, and the Emperor gave him the cross on the field of Valontina. A true Dauphinois, he has always taken care to keep in line; and thus he has his retiring-pension and also that of the Legion. He is an infantry-soldier, named Goguelat, and entered the gnard in 1812. After a fashion, he's a sort of housekeeper to Gondrin. They both live with the widow of a pedler, to whom they pay over their money. The good creature lodges, feeds, clothes, and cares for them as if they were her children. Goguelat is the postman of the district. In that capacity he is also the gossip of the neighborhood, and the habit of retailing news has made him the orator of the *veillées*, or evening gatherings, the talker-in-chief; in fact, Gondrin looks upon him as a wit, and a knowing fellow. When Goguelat discourses of Napoleon, the other seems to guess at his words by the mere motion of his lips. If they are going to-night to a *veillée* which is to take place in one of my barns, and if we can see them without being seen ourselves, you shall be a spectator of the scene. Here we are at the pool, but I don't see my friend Gondrin."

The doctor and his companion looked about them carefully, and saw nothing but the pick-axe, the

shovel, the wheelbarrow, and the military jacket of the pontonier, lying beside a mound of black mud; no vestige of the man could be seen along the various stony beds made by the streams of water, which formed irregular hollows, nearly all of them shaded by little shrubs.

"He can't be far off. Ohé! Gondrin!" cried Benassis.

At this moment Genestas observed the smoke of a pipe issuing from the tangled branches of a thicket, and pointed it out to the doctor, who repeated his call. Presently the old pontonier thrust out his head, recognized the mayor, and came down a little pathway.

"Well, my old man!" cried Benassis, making a sort of ear-trumpet with the palm of his hand. "Here is a comrade, an Egyptian, who wants to see you."

Gondrin raised his head quickly and gave Genestas the deep scrutinizing glance which old soldiers learn to give at each other through the habit of prompt decision in moments of danger. Seeing the red ribbon in the captain's buttonhole, he silently carried the back of his hand to his forehead.

"If the Little Corporal were still alive," cried the officer, "you would have your cross, and a fine pension; for you saved the lives of those who wore the epaulets, and who got across that river on the first of October, 1812. But, my friend," added the captain, getting off his horse, and taking the man's hand in his own with a sudden impulse of the heart, "I am not the minister of war."

Hearing these words, the old soldier straightened himself on his legs, after knocking the ashes out of his pipe and laying it away; then he replied, bowing his head:—

"I only did my duty, my officer; but others have not done theirs by me. They demand my papers! 'My papers?' I said to them, 'why, they are the 29th Bulletin.'"

"You must try again, comrade. By the help of a little influence you can't fail in these days to obtain justice."

"Justice!" cried the old man in a tone which made the doctor and the captain quiver.

There was a moment's silence, during which the riders looked at this shattered relic of the iron soldiery picked by Napoleon from three generations of martial men. Gondrin was certainly a fine specimen of that indestructible mass which might bend, but was never broken. The old man was scarcely five feet in height; his shoulders and chest were enormously developed; his tanned face, seamed with wrinkles, hollow and yet muscular, still retained some traces of a war-like career. Everything about him was rough-hewn. His brow was like a square of stone; the scanty gray hair grew feebly, as though life were already lacking to the weary head; but his arms, covered with hair like his breast, which was partly seen through the opening of the coarse shirt, showed extraordinary vigor, and he stood as firmly on his bent and twisted legs as if they were an immovable pedestal.

"Justice!" he repeated, "there's none for such as we! Who is there to stand up for us, and get us our dues? The bread-basket has got to be filled," he said, tapping his stomach, "it won't give us time to wait. And so, as the promises of men who spend their lives in warm corners of the government-offices haven't the virtue of vegetables, I've come back here to get

my pay out of mother earth," he said, striking the mud with his shovel.

"Old comrade, this won't do!" said Genestas. "I owe my life to you; and I should be most ungrateful if I did not do a hand's turn to help you. I remember crossing the bridge at Beresina, and I know other old campaigners who keep its memory green; they will help me to get your services to the country rewarded as they should be."

"You'll be called a Bonapartist; don't meddle with it, my officer. Besides, I've gone to the rear; I've made my hole here, like a spent ball. Only, I didn't expect, after crossing the desert on camels and drinking my wine by a corner of the fire of Moscow, to die under the trees my father planted," he said, going back to his work.

"Poor old man," said Genestas: "in his place, I should do the same. Alas! the father of us all is no more. Monsieur," he added, turning to Benassis, "the resignation of the man is what saddens me most. He does not know how much he interests me; he will take me for one of those gilded scoundrels who care nothing for the sorrows of a soldier."

The captain turned abruptly, seized the old man by the hand, and shouted in his ear: —

"By the cross I wear, which formerly meant honor, I swear to do all that is humanly possible to get you a pension; even if I have to swallow ten rebuffs from the minister of war, and petition the king, the dauphin, and the whole concern."

Hearing these words, old Gondrin trembled, looked at Genestas, and said, —

"You must have been a common soldier?"

The captain nodded. At the sign, the old man wiped his hand, took that of Genestas, wrung it with an action full of feeling, and said:—

"My general, when I went into the water down there, I meant to give my life for the army; therefore I gained something, for, you see, I am still on my stumps. Come, do you want to know what is really at the bottom of my heart? Well, here it is! ever since *the other* was driven away I have had no interest in anything. They've put me here," he added gayly, pointing to the ground; "I've got twenty thousand francs to get out of it, and I'll take them in detail,—as *the other* used to say."

"Well, comrade," said Genestas, much moved by the sublimity of this forgiveness, "you have here, at least, the one thing you cannot prevent me from giving you—"

He struck his heart, looked earnestly at the old man for a moment, remounted his horse, and rode away beside Benassis.

"Such administrative cruelties foment the quarrel of the poor against the rich," said the doctor. "The men to whom power is momentarily confided never think seriously of the effect in the long run of an injustice done to a man of the people. A poor man, obliged to earn his daily bread, does not struggle long with them, that is true; but he talks, and finds an echo in other suffering hearts. Each iniquity is multiplied by the number of those who feel that it strikes them. The leaven works. It is nothing at first, but it leads to dire evil; such injustices keep up in the minds of the

people a covert hatred against social superiority. The bourgeois becomes, and remains, an enemy to the poor man, who forthwith puts him outside the pale of law and deceives and robs him. To the poor, robbery is no longer a delinquency or a crime, but a vengeance. If, when a question of justice to the poor man arises, an administrator maltreats him and cheats him of his acquired rights, how can we expect the unhappy starving creature to feel resignation at his wrongs, or respect for property. It makes me quiver to think that some young clerk whose business it is to dust the papers in a government office, enjoys the thousand francs pension that was promised to Gondrin. And yet you will find persons who have never realized the extremes of suffering, denouncing the excesses of popular vengeance! On the day when our government gives cause for more individual misery than prosperity its overthrow hangs by a thread; in overthrowing it, the people square the account after their own fashion. Statesmen should picture to their minds the poor man sitting at the feet of Justice, — a divinity that was invented for him alone."

As they reached the confines of the village, Benassis saw two persons walking before them on the road, and he said to the captain, who had been riding pensively for some time: —

"You have seen the resigned poverty of an army veteran, now you shall see that of an old husbandman. Here's a man who all his life has dug and tilled and sowed and reaped for the interests of others."

Genestas observed an old man walking in company with an old woman. The man seemed to suffer from

sciatica, and walked with difficulty, his feet in wretched wooden shoes. On his shoulder he carried a workman's satchel, in the pocket of which were a number of tools, whose handles, blackened by sweat and by long usage, jostled together with a slight noise. The pocket on the other side of the satchel contained bread, a few raw onions, and some nuts. The man's legs seemed distorted; his back was bent double by habitual toil, which forced him to walk in a decrepit attitude, and to lean on a long stick to preserve his equilibrium. His hair, white as snow, hung down beneath a miserable hat, rusty from the action of the weather, and re-sewn here and there with white thread. His garments of coarse cloth were patched in a hundred places, showing diversities of color. He was, in fact, a sort of human ruin, and none of the characteristics which make other ruins so touching were lacking here. His wife, more erect than himself, but likewise clothed in rags, wore a coarse cap, and carried on her back, suspended by a strap passed through its handles, an earthenware jug, which was round in outline and flattened on the sides.

The pair raised their heads as they heard the horses' feet, recognized Benassis, and stopped short. These two old persons, one decrepit through toil, the other, his faithful companion, equally a wreck, both of them with faces whose features were effaced by wrinkles, with skins blackened by the sun and hardened by the inclemencies of the weather, were grievous to behold. If the story of their lives had not been written on their countenances, their attitudes would have revealed it. Both had toiled ceaselessly, and ceaselessly

had they suffered together, with many griefs to share, and few joys. They seemed to have grown used to their hapless fate, just as prisoners grow accustomed to their prison; in them, all was simple-mindedness. Their faces were not devoid of a certain cheerful frankness. If closely examined, their monotonous life — the lot of the poor — seemed almost enviable. They bore the marks of suffering, but not of grief.

"Well, my brave old Moreau; so you persist in still working?" exclaimed the doctor.

"Yes, Monsieur Benassis; I'll clear one or two more heaths for you before I give up the ghost," answered the old man merrily, his little black eyes twinkling.

"Is it wine your wife is carrying? If you won't take any rest, at least you must drink wine."

"Rest! why, that tires me. When I'm at work in the sun, clearing the land, the sun and the air put new life into me. As to wine, yes, monsieur, that's wine; and I know very well it is you who have helped us to buy it for next to nothing from the mayor of Courteil. Ah! you may be as sly as you please, but your works are known all the same."

"Well, good-by, mother; I suppose you are going to the play at Champferlu to-day?"

"Yes, monsieur, it began last night."

"Keep up your courage," said Benassis; "you ought to feel happy sometimes, when you look at the mountain, which has been almost wholly cleared by your two selves."

"Yes, monsieur," said the old woman, "it's our work; we've earned the right to eat our bread."

"See," said Benassis to Genestas, "labor and the

soil to cultivate, — that's the capital of the poor. The worthy man would think himself degraded if he begged or went to an almshouse; he means to die with a spade in his hand, in the open fields, in the sunlight! Faith, he has a noble courage! By dint of working, labor has become his breath of life; but he is not afraid of death; he is deeply philosophical without suspecting it. It was the sight of old Moreau that gave me the idea of founding an asylum in this district for laborers and working-men, indeed for all country-people who, having worked throughout their lives, have reached an honorable but penniless old age. Monsieur, I did not reckon on the fortune I have made here, which is personally valueless to me. A man who has fallen from the summits of hope needs but little here below. The life of idlers is the only life that is costly; perhaps it may even be called a social theft to consume without producing. Napoleon, when told of the discussions that arose, after his fall, on the subject of his pension, declared that he only needed a horse and three francs a day. When I came here, I renounced money. Since then, I have come to recognize that money represents faculties, and is necessary to the purpose of doing good. I have, therefore, in my will, given this house to found a home where unfortunate old men without a refuge, and less proud than Moreau, may spend their last days. Also, a portion of the nine thousand francs a year which my farms and the flour-mill bring in will be employed to give, in severe winters, a certain amount of relief in their own homes to individuals who are really necessitous. The establishment will be under the control of the municipal council,

to whom I have added the curate as president. In this way, the fortune which chance has helped me to make in this village will stay here. The rules of my institution are all drawn up in my will; it would be wearisome if I repeated them to you now, — enough to say that I have foreseen everything. I have even created a reserve-fund, which will some day enable the council to pay scholarships to young persons who may show a hopeful inclination for the arts or sciences. So, even after my death my work of civilization will still go on. Don't you know, Captain Bluteau, that when we once begin a task, there is something within us always goading us not to leave it incomplete? That instinct of order and perfection is one of the clearest signs we have of a future destiny. Come, let us ride fast; I must finish my rounds, and there are still five or six patients to visit."

After trotting sometime in silence, Benassis said to his companion with a laugh: —

"Faith, Captain Bluteau, you make me chatter like a jackdaw, and you tell me nothing of your own life, which must be a curious one. A soldier of your age has seen too much not to have many an adventure to relate."

"But," answered Genestas, "my life is an army life; all military faces look alike. Never having been in command, being always under orders to receive or give the sabre-cuts, I have done like all the rest. I went where Napoleon led us; I was in line in all the battles where the Guard was engaged. Those events are well known. To look after our horses, suffer hunger and thirst at times, fight when necessary, — that's the whole life of a soldier. Is n't it as simple as how-d'ye-do? There are private battles for each of us in the mere casting a

shoe, which leaves us in the lurch. In fact, I have seen so many countries that seeing has grown to be a matter-of-course; and I've seen so many dead men that I have come to count my own life as a mere nothing."

"Nevertheless, you must have been personally in peril at certain times, and those particular dangers would be interesting if related by you."

"Perhaps so," answered the captain.

"Well, tell me the thing that most stirred you. Don't be afraid. I won't think you wanting in modesty even if you tell me some trait of heroism. When a man is certain of the comprehension of those in whom he confides, may he not feel a certain pleasure in saying, 'I did that'?"

"I'll tell you a circumstance which at times has caused me some remorse. During our fifteen years of fighting, it never once happened that I killed a man except in legitimate defence. We are formed in line, we charge; if we don't knock over those we meet they won't ask permission to bleed us; therefore we must slay not to be slain, and the conscience is easy. But, my dear monsieur, I did once take the life of a comrade under peculiar circumstances. When I reflect upon it the thing troubles me; the convulsed face of the man comes back to me sometimes. You shall judge. It was during the retreat from Moscow. We looked more like a herd of overdriven cattle than the grand army of France. Farewell to discipline and banners! every man was his own master; and the Emperor, as you might say, knew the point at which his power stopped. When we arrived at Studzianka, a little village above the Beresina, we found barns, hovels to

pull down for firewood, potatoes in the ground, and a few beet-roots. For some time past we had met with neither houses nor victuals; so the army junketed. First come, as you may suppose, were first served, and they ate up everything. I was among the last. Happily for me, I was hungry for nothing but sleep. I saw a barn, entered it, found a score of generals and superior officers, all men of great merit; I say it without flattery, — Junot, Narbonne, the Emperor's aide-de-camp, in short, the bigwigs of the army. There were also a few private soldiers who would n't have given up their straw litter to a marshal of France. Some were asleep standing, leaning against the wall for want of room; others lay stretched on the floor, and all were so huddled together to keep warm that I looked in vain for a corner to stow myself. There was I, stepping, I might say, over a floor of men; some groaned, others said nothing, but no one made room for me; they would n't have moved to avoid a cannon-ball, and they certainly were not obliged to follow the rules of a decent and puerile civility. I saw, at last, at the farther end of the barn, a sort of interior roof, on which no one had had the wit, or perhaps the strength, to clamber. I got up there and settled myself; lying at full length, I could look down upon the men below me, stretched out like calves. That melancholy sight almost made me laugh. Some were gnawing frozen carrots and expressing a sort of animal pleasure; the generals, wrapped in shabby shawls, were snoring like thunder. A burning pine-knot lighted up the barn; if it had set fire to the place no one would have risen to put it out. I lay on my back, and before going to sleep, I naturally cast my eyes

above me; there I beheld the main beam, which supported the joists on which the roof rested, swaying gently from east to west—that cursed beam was actually dancing! ‘Messieurs,’ I said, ‘there’s a comrade outside who wants to warm himself at our expense.’ The beam was on the point of falling. ‘Messieurs! Messieurs! we shall be killed; look at the beam!’ cried I, loud enough to rouse my bedfellows. Monsieur, they did look at the beam; but those who had been asleep turned over and slept again, and those who were eating never so much as answered me. Seeing this, I was forced to leave my nook at the risk of another man’s taking it, for I felt bound to save such a nest of heroes. I ran out, turned the angle of the barn, and spied a tall devil of a Wurtemberger, who was dragging at the beam with a certain enthusiasm. ‘Let go! let go!’ I cried, to make him understand he must stop that work. ‘Get out of my sight, or I’ll strike you dead,’ he said in German. ‘Get out of my sight, indeed!’ I answered; ‘that’s not the point;’ and I took his own gun, which he had laid on the ground, and shot him through the body; then I turned in and went to sleep. That’s the whole of it.”

“It was a case of legitimate defence, directed against one man for the safety of many; you can’t reproach yourself with that,” said Benassis.

“The others,” resumed Genestas, “thought it was some notion of mine; but notion or not, many of those men are sleeping to-day in opulent mansions without a feeling of gratitude in their hearts.”

“Do you do good merely for the sake of that exorbitant interest called gratitude?” said Benassis, laughing. “That’s usury.”

"I know very well," said Genestas, "that the merit of a good deed evaporates with the first profit we derive from it. Even to relate it is to draw a dividend of self-love, which is worth as much to us as gratitude. Still, if a modest man keeps silence, the obliged party will never speak of the obligation. According to your theory, the people need good examples; and if everybody keeps silence, where will you find them? Another thing! if our poor pontonier, who saved the French army at Beresina, and has never had a chance to tell his deed to his own advantage, had lost the use of his hands, would his sense of duty fulfilled give him his daily bread? Answer me that, philosopher."

"Perhaps there's no hard and fast law in morality," said Benassis; "but such an idea is dangerous; it allows selfishness to interpret cases of conscience to its own advantage. Listen to me, captain; is n't the man who strictly obeys the principles of morality greater than he who lays them aside, though it be from necessity? Our pontonier, utterly helpless and dying from hunger, is sublime with the sublimity of Homer, is he not? Human life is doubtless the trial-scene of virtue as it is of genius, — both demanded by a better world. Virtue and genius seem to me the noblest forms of the complete and unfailing self-devotion which Jesus Christ came into the world to teach to man. Genius continues poor, while it lights that world; virtue keeps silence, as she sacrifices herself for the good of others."

"Agreed, monsieur," said Genestas; "but the earth is inhabited by men and not by angels; we are none of us perfect."

"You are right," replied Benassis. "For myself, I

have grossly abused the faculty of wrong-doing. But ought we not to strain after perfection? Is not virtue a noble ideal which the soul should contemplate unceasingly as its celestial model?"

"Amen," said the soldier. "I grant your position. A virtuous man is a noble sight; but admit also that virtue is a divinity who may, in all honor, allow herself a little human conversation."

"Ah, monsieur," said the doctor, smiling with a sort of bitter melancholy, "yours is the indulgence of one who is at peace with himself. I am stern as one who sees the stains upon his life which must be washed away."

The riders had now reached a cottage standing near the brink of the torrent. The doctor entered it; Genestas remained at the threshold of the door, looking first at the sparkling landscape before him and then to the interior of the cottage, where a man was lying in bed. After examining the patient, Benassis suddenly exclaimed:—

"I need n't come here any more, my good woman, if you don't do what I order. You have given bread to your husband—do you want to kill him? What the mischief! if you let him swallow anything but his dog-grass infusion I won't set my foot in here again, and you may go and get a physician where you please."

"But, my dear Monsieur Benassis, my poor old man cried with hunger; when a man has n't had anything in his stomach for fifteen days—"

"Now, then, do you mean to listen to me? If you let your man eat a single mouthful of bread until I allow him nourishment, you'll kill him—do you hear me?"

"I'll deny him everything, my dear good monsieur. Is he any better?" she asked, following the doctor to the door.

"No; you've made him worse by giving him things to eat. Can't I induce you, thoughtless creature that you are, not to feed people who must live on a diet? Peasants are incorrigible," he added, turning to Genestas; "if a patient has n't eaten anything for some days, they think he'll die, and they stuff him with soup and wine. Here's a foolish woman who has nearly killed her husband."

"Killed my husband! what, with a poor little sop of bread and wine?"

"Exactly, my good woman; I am astonished to find him alive after the little sop you gave him. Don't forget, now, to do precisely as I tell you."

"Oh! my dear Monsieur Benassis, I'd rather die myself than fail this time."

"Well, we shall see. To-morrow afternoon I'll come again and bleed him."

"Let us follow the stream on foot," said Benassis to Genestas; "from here to the house where I am going there is no bridle-path. The little boy of these people will hold our horses. Admire our lovely valley," he said presently; "is n't it like an English garden? We are going to the house of a workman who is inconsolable for the loss of a child. His eldest son, when still a lad, wished to do a man's work; during the last harvest the poor boy exceeded his strength, and he died of debility at the end of the autumn. It is the first time I have met with the paternal sentiment so fully developed. The peasants usually regret their dead

as the loss of some useful thing which added to their means of support; and grief is apportioned to the age. The child when adult becomes a revenue to the father. But this poor man loved his son. 'Nothing can console me for this loss,' he said to me one day when I found him in a field, standing stock still, leaning on his scythe, forgetful of his work, and holding in his hand the whetstone which he had taken out to use, but was not using. He has never again spoken of his grief; but he has grown taciturn and ailing. To-day one of his little girls is ill."

As they talked, Benassis and his guest reached a little house standing on a paved road that led to a tan-mill. There, under some willows, they saw a man about forty years of age, who was standing still, eating a piece of bread, rubbed over with garlic.

"Well, Gasnier, is the little girl better?"

"I don't know, monsieur," he answered, with a gloomy air; "you'll see for yourself; my wife is with her. I fear death has set foot within my house to carry them all away from me, in spite of your care."

"Death does not take up its abode in any house, Gasnier; it has not the time. Don't lose courage."

Benassis went into the house, followed by the father. Half an hour later he came out, accompanied by the mother, to whom he said:—

"Don't be the least uneasy; do exactly what I have told you to do; she is saved."

"If all this bores you," said the doctor to Genestas, as they mounted their horses, "I will put you into the road to the village, and you can easily find your way home."

"No; on my word of honor, it does not bore me."

"But you will everywhere see cottages that are all alike. Nothing is apparently more monotonous than the country."

"Let us go on," said the soldier.

For several hours they rode about the country, traversing the whole breadth of the district, and returning in the afternoon to the part nearest the village.

"Now I must go down there," said the doctor to Genestas, pointing to a spot surrounded by elms. "Those trees are possibly two hundred years old," he added. "The woman for whom a lad came to fetch me last evening, saying she had turned white, lives there."

"Was it anything dangerous?"

"No," said Benassis, "merely the result of pregnancy. She is in her last month, and women are subject to spasms at that time. But, as a matter of precaution, I must see that nothing alarming supervenes; I shall deliver her myself. Besides, if we go there, I can show you one of our new industries, a brick-field. The road is good; will you gallop?"

"Can your horse keep up with mine?" said Genestas, as he called to his beast, "On, Neptune!"

In the twinkling of an eye the captain was a hundred feet in advance, disappearing in a cloud of dust; but in spite of his horse's speed he heard the doctor at his side. Benassis said a word to his animal, and shot beyond the captain, who rejoined him only at the brick-field, where he found the doctor quietly fastening his horse to the staple of a log-fence.

"The devil take you!" cried Genestas, looking at

the doctor's horse, which neither sweated nor panted, "what kind of animal is that?"

"Ah!" replied Benassis, laughing, "you took him for a screw. The history of the noble beast is too long to tell you now: suffice it to say, Roustan is a true barb from the Atlas, and a barb is the equal of an Arab. Mine goes up the mountain-side at full gallop without turning a hair, and trots with a sure foot along the precipices. He was a gift well-earned, moreover. A father gave him to me in return for the life of his daughter, one of the richest heiresses in Europe, whom I found dying on the road to Savoie. If I were to tell you how I cured that young woman, you would set me down for a quack. Hey! I hear the bells of horses and the roll of a cart along the road; let's see if it is Vigneau himself: if it is, look well at the man."

Presently the captain saw four enormous horses harnessed like those owned by the well-to-do farmers of Brie. The woollen ear-knots, the bells, the leathern straps, all had a comfortable sort of spruceness. In the huge waggon, painted blue, stood a stout, chubby-cheeked lad, browned by the sun, who whistled as he held his whip like a soldier presenting arms.

"No; it is only the waggoner," said Benassis. "But just admire how the industrial well-being of the master is reflected everywhere, even in the equipment of his cart and cartman. Isn't that an indication of a commercial intelligence somewhat rare in the depths of a country district?"

"Yes, indeed; it all looks well set-up," replied the soldier.

"Just so: Vigneau owns two such teams; besides

which he has a little cob on which he goes about attending to his affairs; for his business has now spread pretty far. Four years ago the man owned nothing, — I'm mistaken, he owned debts. But let us go in."

"My lad," said Benassis to the cartman, "Madame Vigneau is of course at home?"

"Monsieur, she is in the garden. I saw her just now, over the hedge. I'll tell her you are here."

The captain followed Benassis, who led him across a wide piece of ground shut in by hedges. In a corner of the enclosure was a mound of white earth, and the potter's clay necessary to the fabrication of bricks and tiles. On another side were piles of fagots and cut wood to supply the furnaces; farther on, in an open space fenced with hurdles, several workmen were crushing white stones, or manipulating the clay for bricks. Facing the entrance, and under the great elms, the manufacture of tiles, both round and square, was carried on in a large hall, as it were, of shade and verdure, closed in by the roof of the drying-house; near which was seen the kiln with its deep jaws, its long shovels, its black and sunken pathway. Parallel with these buildings stood another, of somewhat squalid appearance, which served as a dwelling-house for the family, and with which the coach-house, stables, cattle-sheds, and barns were connected. Pigs and poultry roamed about the wide enclosure; but the cleanliness of the different establishments, and the repair in which all were kept, testified to the vigilance of a master.

"The predecessor of Vigneau," said Benassis, "was a miserable fellow, an idler who cared for nothing but

drink. Formerly a journeyman, he knew how to heat the furnace and shape his bricks, but that was all; he had neither activity nor commercial intelligence. If no one came to buy his merchandise, he let it stay where it was till it deteriorated and became a total loss. He was always at starvation point. His wife, whom he rendered half-idiotic by ill-usage, grovelled in wretchedness. The laziness, the miserable stupidity of the man made me so unhappy, and the sight of the brickyard was so disagreeable to me, that I avoided passing this way. Fortunately the man had an attack of paralysis, and I sent him to the hospital at Grenoble. The owner of the property, seeing the condition it was in, consented to take back the lease without discussion, and I looked about for new tenants willing to share in the improvements I wished to introduce throughout all the village industries. The husband of a lady's maid of Madame Gravier, a poor journeyman, earning very poor wages from the potter for whom he worked, and who could scarcely support his family, listened to my advice. He had the courage to hire the brick-field without having a penny in hand. He came here, taught his wife and the old mother of his wife, and his own mother, how to shape the bricks, and made them his workmen. Upon my word of honor, I don't see how they ever managed. Probably Vigneau borrowed wood to heat his furnace; he must have gone at night and fetched his clay by the hodful, and worked it by day; in fact, he secretly displayed a really boundless energy; and the two old mothers, clothed in rags, worked like negro-slaves. Vigneau managed to bake several batches, and passed his first year eating bread which was dearly bought by

the sweat of all their brows ; but he held firm. His courage, his patience, his capabilities, made him an object of interest to many persons, and he became known. Indefatigable in his business, he went in the morning to Grenoble and sold his tiles and bricks, getting home towards the middle of the day, and going out again at night : he seemed to multiply himself at his work.

“Towards the end of the first year, he hired two young lads to help him. Seeing that, I lent him some money. Well, monsieur, from year to year the condition of the family has improved. By the second year, the old women shaped no more bricks, and crushed no more stones ; they cultivated little gardens, made the soup, mended the clothes, spun in the evening and gathered wood in the daytime. The young woman, who knows how to read and write, keeps the accounts. Vigneau bought a little horse on which he went about the neighborhood and got custom ; then he studied the art of brick-making, found means to manufacture the fine, white, square brick, and sold it below the ordinary price. When he set up his first cart his wife became almost elegant. Everything about his household was in keeping with his circumstances ; and he has always maintained order, economy, and cleanliness, — the generative principles of his prosperity. After a time, he employed six workmen, and paid them well ; next, a cartman, putting his stables on a good footing : in short, little by little, by taxing his ingenuity, improving his work, and extending his business, he has arrived at ease and a competence. Last year he bought the brickyard ; next year he will rebuild his house. At the present time,

the whole family are healthy and well-clothed. The wife, formerly pale and thin, sharing, as she did, the cares and anxieties of the master, is once more plump and fresh and pretty. The two old mothers are very happy, and attend to the minor details of the housekeeping and the business. Labor has brought money; and money, by giving peace of mind, has brought health, plenty, and happiness. Really, this household is, to me, the living epitome of my district, and of all young commercial States. This brickyard, once so gloomy, empty, dirty, and unproductive, is now in full operation, much patronized, animated, rich, and amply stocked. Large quantities of wood are on hand, and all the material needed for the coming season; you know, of course, that brick-making can be carried on only during a part of the year, — from June to September. Is n't it a pleasure to see such activity? Vigneau has had a hand in every building that has gone up in the village. Always wide-awake, always coming and going about his business, always active, he is called by his townsmen the 'knight of duty.'"¹

Benassis had scarcely finished speaking, when a well-dressed young woman, wearing a pretty cap, white stockings, a silk apron, and a pink dress, — an attire which recalled her former position of lady's-maid, — opened the iron gate which led from the garden, and came forward as quickly as her condition would permit. The two friends went forward to meet her. Madame Vigneau was a plump and rather pretty woman, with a sunburnt skin, whose natural complexion, however,

¹ Le dévorant, devoirant: compaignon du devoir. — Dict. Hist. d'Argot, L. Larchey. An association of working-men. — Littré.

must have been fair. Though her forehead showed a few lines, the traces of her former poverty, her countenance was happy and prepossessing.

"Monsieur Benassis," she said, in a pleading tone of voice, as she saw him pause, "won't you do me the honor to rest awhile in my house?"

"Willingly," he said; "go in, captain."

"You gentlemen must have found it very warm. Will you take a little milk, or wine? Monsieur Benassis, do taste the wine my husband has had the kindness to get for my confinement. You can tell me if it is good."

"You have a good man for a husband."

"Yes, monsieur," she said calmly, turning round; "my lot is a rich one."

"We will not take anything, Madame Vigneau; I only came to see that nothing serious had happened to you."

"Nothing," she said; "I was, as you see, at work in the garden, for the sake of doing something."

At this moment, the two mothers came in to see Benassis, and the waggoner stood still in the courtyard, in a position that enabled him to gaze at the doctor.

"Come, give me your hand," said Benassis to Madame Vigneau.

He felt the young woman's pulse with scrupulous attention, remaining silent and thoughtful. Meanwhile the three women examined the captain with the naïve curiosity that country people feel no shame in exhibiting.

"You can't be better," exclaimed the doctor gayly.

"Will she be confined soon?" cried the two mothers.

"This week, no doubt. Vigneau is out?" he asked, after a pause.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the young wife; "he wants to attend to all his affairs so that he can stay at home when I am ill, the dear man."

"Well, my children, you'll prosper. Keep on making a fortune, and making a family."

Genestas was full of admiration for the neatness that reigned inside the house, though it was almost in ruins without. Seeing his surprise, Benassis said to him:—

"There is no one like Madame Vigneau for making a good home about her. I wish several people in the village would come here and take a lesson."

The wife turned her head away, blushing; but the two mothers let their faces beam with the pleasure they felt at the doctor's praises. All three accompanied him to the place where the horses were standing.

"Well," said Benassis, addressing the two old women, "you are very happy, are not you? Don't you long to be grandmothers?"

"Ah! don't speak of it," said the young woman; "they provoke me so! My two mothers want a boy, my husband wishes for a little girl. I think it will be very difficult to please them all."

"But you—what do you want?" asked Benassis, laughing.

"Ah, monsieur, I want a child."

"See, she is already a mother," said the doctor to the soldier, as he took his horse by the bridle.

"Adieu, Monsieur Benassis," said the young woman, "my husband will be very sorry he was away when he hears that you have been here."

"He won't forget to send my thousand tiles to the Granges-aux-Belles?"

"You know he would put aside every other order for yours. His greatest regret is that he has to let you pay him; but I tell him that your money brings happiness, — and so it does."

"Good-by," said Benassis.

The three women, the waggoner, and two workmen who came out of the brickyard, remained in a group near the log-fence, so as to enjoy his presence to the last moment; as we all are apt to do with our cherished friends. The inspirations of the heart are alike everywhere; the same sweet customs of friendship are found in every land.

Looking at the position of the sun, Benassis said to his companion: "We have still two hours of daylight, and if you are not very hungry we will go and see a charming young creature, to whom I usually give the time that is left between the last visit I have to pay and my dinner hour. They call her, in the district, my 'good friend;' but you are not to think that this title, — used in these parts to mean a future wife — covers or implies the slightest scandal. Although my care of this poor girl has made her the object of a quite conceivable jealousy, yet the opinion held by all as to my character prevents any evil suppositions. If none can understand the whim to which I seem to have yielded in giving the Fosseuse a small income, so that she may live without being obliged to work, they nevertheless, one and all, believe in her virtue; and every one knows that if my affection for her passed the limits of friendly interest, I should not hesitate to marry her. But,"

added the doctor, forcing a smile, "neither in this district nor elsewhere, does there exist a wife for me. A very warm-hearted man feels an unconquerable need to attach himself to one thing, or to one being, among the many things and beings that surround him, — above all when, to him, life is a desert. For that reason, monsieur, we should always judge favorably of a man who loves his horse or his dog. Among the suffering flock which fate has confided to my care, this poor sick girl is to me what the sun is to my own land, my native Languedoc; or the pet lamb the shepherd maidens deck with faded ribbons, to whom they talk as they let them browse along the wheat-fields, and whose lagging step even the sheep-dog never hastens."

While saying these words, Benassis remained standing, his hand on his horse's mane, about to mount and yet not mounting, as if the feelings that moved him were incompatible with any violent action.

"Come," he said, "come and see her. To take you there proves, does it not? that I treat her like a sister."

When they had both mounted, Genestas said to the doctor: "Am I indiscreet in asking you for some information about your Fosseuse? Among the many lives you have made known to me, hers cannot be the least interesting."

"Monsieur," said Benassis, stopping his horse, "perhaps you cannot share the interest with which the Fosseuse inspires me. Her destiny resembles mine; we have both missed our vocation; the feelings I have for her, the emotions I pass through when I see her, are caused by the similarity of our fate. When you entered the career of arms you either followed your inclinations

or you came to like your profession ; otherwise you would not have stayed until your present age under the galling yoke of military discipline ; you can therefore comprehend neither the sufferings of a soul whose desires are ever reviving and forever disappointed, nor the ceaseless grief of a being forced to live outside the pale of his own sphere. Such sufferings remain a secret between the human soul and God, who sends the affliction ; for they alone know the force of the emotions caused by the adverse circumstances of life. Yet you yourself, a witness hardened to the sight of misfortunes produced by a long war, have you never felt a sadness in your heart as you looked at a tree whose leaves were yellow in the spring-time, — a tree that languished and died because it stood on ground where the conditions necessary to its development were lacking ? When I was a lad of twenty, the passive melancholy of a stunted plant was grievous to me ; and now I turn my head from the sight. My youthful distress was a vague presentiment of the sorrows of my manhood ; a sort of sympathy between my present and the future I instinctively perceived in that vegetable life, withering untimely before the appointed end of things and men."

"I thought, when I saw how good you are, that you had suffered."

"You see, monsieur," resumed the doctor, making no reply to Genestas's words, "that to speak of the Fosseuse is to speak of myself. The Fosseuse is a plant exiled from its native soil, — a human plant, consumed by sad or searching thoughts which live and multiply on one another. The poor girl is always ailing. In her, the spirit kills the body. Could I look coldly upon the

feeble creature, a prey to the greatest and the least-comprehended anguish that there is in this selfish world, when I, a man, inured to suffering, am tempted night after night to refuse to bear the burden of such sorrow any longer? Perhaps I should refuse, were it not for a thought which soothes my anguish and fills my heart with sweet illusions. Even if all were not the children of one God, still, the Fosseuse would be my sister in suffering."

Benassis pressed the flanks of his horse and rode rapidly forward, as if he feared to continue a conversation thus begun.

"Monsieur," he resumed, when the horses were again trotting together, "Nature has, so to speak, created this poor girl for suffering, just as she creates other women for pleasure. In observing such predestinations it is impossible not to believe in another life. Everything reacts upon the Fosseuse: if the weather is gray and sombre, she is sad and weeps with the skies, — that is her own expression. She sings with the birds, grows calm and serene with the blue heavens; she is even beautiful on a lovely day. A delicate perfume is to her an almost inexhaustible pleasure. I have seen her, the livelong day, enjoying the fragrance of mignonette after one of those rainy mornings which draw out the soul of flowers and give to the day I know not what of freshness and brilliancy; on such days she expands with nature and the blossoming plants. If the atmosphere is heavy and electrical, she is nervously excited and cannot be calmed; she goes to bed, and complains of many different ills without knowing what is the matter with her. If I question her, she says her bones are soften-

ing, or that her flesh is turning to water. During the period of such inanimation, she is conscious of life only through suffering. Her heart is outside of her,—to give you another of her sayings. Sometimes I find the poor girl weeping at the scene our mountains give at sunset, when innumerable magnificent clouds cluster about their golden peaks. ‘Why do you weep, my child?’ I say to her. ‘I do not know,’ she answers; ‘I am like one bewildered by looking up there. I don’t know where I am, I see so far.’ ‘What do you see?’ ‘Monsieur, I cannot tell it to you.’ There is no use in questioning her further, you cannot get a word from her; she will give you glances full of thoughts, or she will remain, with moist eyes, mute and visibly collecting herself in meditation. Her absorption of mind is so great that it communicates itself to others; at least it acts upon me like a cloud overcharged with electricity. I pressed her one day with questions. With all my will I desired to talk with her, and I said a few sharp words; well, she burst into tears. At other times she is gay, attractive, smiling, busy, intelligent, and sparkling; she converses with pleasure, and expresses new and original ideas. She is, however, incapable of settling to any regular work; if she goes to the fields, she spends hours in watching a flower, in looking at the colors of the water, or studying the picturesque marvels found in the depths of still, clear pools,—the bright mosaic of pebbles, earth, and sand, of water-plants and mosses, and those brown sediments whose tones offer to the eye such curious contrasts. When I first came to this place, the poor girl was wasting with hunger; ashamed to eat the bread of others, she would not ask for charity until con-

strained to do so by the extremity of suffering. Sometimes shame gave her energy, and for a few days she worked in the fields; but her strength was soon exhausted, and illness obliged her to give up a labor she had scarcely begun. No sooner was she better, than she went to a neighboring farm and asked for the care of the cattle; but after fulfilling the duty for a while with intelligence, she suddenly left it and went away, without giving any reason. The regular daily labor was doubtless too heavy a yoke for one whose whole nature is independent and capricious. Then she took to searching for truffles and mushrooms, which she sold in Grenoble. In town, tempted by gewgaws, she forgot her poverty as soon as she had a few coppers in her pocket, and bought ribbons and trumpery, without thinking of her bread on the morrow. Then, if some village girl coveted her brass cross, or the Jeannette heart with its velvet ribbon, she gave them readily, happy in bestowing pleasure; for she lives by her heart. Thus, by turns beloved, pitied, and despised, the poor girl suffered from everything; from her idleness, from her beauty, from her coquetry, — for she is dainty, coquettish, and inquisitive; in short, she is a woman, and yields to her tastes and impressions with the simplicity of a child. Tell her of some noble action, and she quivers and blushes, her bosom heaves, she weeps with joy; speak to her of thieves and miscreants, and she is pale with terror. Nowhere can you find a nature more true, a heart more frank, an honesty more delicate than hers. Give her a hundred pieces of gold to take care of, and she will bury them in a corner and continue to beg her bread."

The doctor's voice changed as he said these words.

"I wished to prove her, monsieur," he resumed, "and I repented it, — a test is a form of espial, or at least a species of distrust."

Here the doctor stopped, as if making some secret reflection, and he did not, therefore, observe the confusion into which these words had thrown his companion : who to conceal his embarrassment stooped to disentangle the reins of his horse. Benassis soon went on, —

"I should like to see my Fosseuse married ; and would willingly give one of my farms to any worthy fellow who would make her happy ; and she could be made happy. Yes, the poor girl would love her children to madness, and all her superabundant feelings would pour themselves into the one sentiment which to a woman includes them all, — motherhood. But no man has yet pleased her. She has, however, a dangerous sensibility. She knows it, and admitted to me her nervous susceptibility when she saw that I perceived it. She belongs to the small number of women in whom the slightest contact produces a perilous tremor ; for that reason, we ought to admire her discretion and her womanly pride. She is as wild as a nightingale. Ah ! what a rich nature, monsieur ! she was born to be opulent and loved ; she would have been so gracious and constant ! At the age of twenty-two she is perishing, — a victim to the too-responsive fibres of an organization which is over-strong or else too delicate. A love betrayed would drive her mad, my poor Fosseuse ! After studying her temperament, and recognizing the genuine nature of her protracted nervous seizures, and her electric aspirations ; after finding her in positive

harmony with the fluctuations of the atmosphere and with the changes of the moon (a fact I have carefully verified), — I have taken charge of her, monsieur, as of a being apart from others, whose unhealthy existence could be understood by none but me. She is, as I have said to you, the lamb with ribbons. But you will now see her ; this is her little house.”

By this time they had gone a third of the way up the mountain along a terraced road bordered with shrubs, which they climbed at a foot-pace. At an angle where the road turns back upon itself, Genestas saw the house. The little dwelling stands on one of the projecting cliffs of the mountain. A pretty sloping lawn of about three acres, planted with trees, across which a brook was flowing in cascades, was surrounded by a low wall, high enough to serve as enclosure but not so high as to shut out the view. The house, built of brick, with a flat roof which projected some feet, made a charming point in the landscape. It was of two stories, with the door and window-shutters painted green. Facing south, it was neither so wide nor so deep as to require any other openings than those on its front, whose rustic charm was simply that of excessive neatness. Following a German fashion, the projection of the eaves was lined with planks painted white. A few acacias in flower and other sweet-smelling trees, wild roses, climbing shrubs, a large walnut-tree which the axe had spared, and two or three weeping-willows planted near the brook, grew about the house. Behind it was a solid group of beeches and fir-trees, making a dark background, from which the pretty building sharply detached itself. At this time of day the air was fragrant with

the odors of the mountain and the garden. The sky, pure and tranquil, was cloudy near the horizon. In the distance, the peaks were beginning to catch the rosy tints which the setting sun so often gives to them. At this height, the whole valley can be seen from Grenoble to the circular rocky basin in whose depths lies the little lake which Genestas had crossed the evening before. Above the house, and at some distance from it, is a line of poplars showing the direction of the road leading from the valley to the highway of Grenoble. The village, now obliquely crossed by the rays of the declining sun, sparkled like a diamond, and reflected in every pane of glass a ruby light which seemed to ripple over them. At the sight, Genestas stopped his horse, and pointed to the village manufactories, the new town, and the house of the Fosseuse.

“Excepting always the victory of Wagram and Napoleon’s re-entrance to the Tuileries in 1815,” he said, sighing, “this gives me the highest emotions I have ever known. I owe this pleasure to you, monsieur; for you have taught me to know the beauties a man may find in the country.”

“Yes,” said the doctor, smiling, “it is better to build cities than to take them.”

“Oh, monsieur! the taking of Moscow, and the surrender of Mantua! Don’t you know what that was? Is it not the glory of every one of us? If it were not for England, Frenchmen would have understood each other, and *he* would not have fallen—our Emperor! I may declare to you now that I love him; he is dead, and,” added the soldier, looking about him, — “there are no spies here, — what a sovereign he was! He divined

the souls of men. He would have put you in his council of state, for he was an administrator — and a great administrator, down to knowing how many cartridges were left in the box after a battle. Poor man! while you were telling me of your Fosseuse, I thought of him, lying dead at Saint Helena, — he! Hein! was that a climate and a dwelling fit for a man accustomed to live with his feet in the stirrups and his seat on a throne? They say he gardened there! Damn it, he was n't born to plant cabbages! But now we have to serve the Bourbons, and serve them loyally, too; for after all, as you said yesterday, France is France."

Uttering the last words, Genestas dismounted and mechanically imitated Benassis, who fastened the bridle of his horse to a tree.

"Is it possible she is absent?" said the doctor, not seeing the Fosseuse on the threshold of the door.

They entered, and found no one on the ground-floor.

"She must have heard the steps of the horses," said Benassis, smiling, "and she has run up to put on a ribbon, a belt, or some such frippery."

He left Genestas by himself, and went upstairs to find her.

The captain looked about the room. The walls were covered with gray paper scattered over with roses; the floor had a straw matting, laid like a carpet. The chairs and tables were of wood with the bark still on. Flower-stands, made of hoops wound with osier and filled with plants and mosses, ornamented the room, whose windows were draped with curtains of white cambric fringed with red. On the mantel-shelf was a

mirror, and a plain porcelain vase between two lamps; before an armchair stood a footstool of fir-bark; near it a table covered with linen already cut out, parts of shirts, a few gussets, and all the apparatus of a sewing-woman, — basket, scissors, thread, and needles. All was clean and fresh, like a shell lately tossed by the sea upon a beach. On the other side of the passage, at the end of which was the staircase, Genestas found the kitchen: the upper floor, like the ground-floor, must therefore have had but two rooms.

“Don’t be afraid,” said Benassis to the Fosseuse; “come down.”

As he heard these words, Genestas hastily retreated to the *salon*. A young girl, slight and well-made, in a dress of pink cambric with tiny stripes, belted round the waist, now showed herself, blushing with modesty and shyness. Her face was not remarkable, except for a certain flatness of the features, — making it resemble the Cossack and Russian faces which the disasters of 1814 have, unhappily, made popularly known in France. The Fosseuse had, like those northern peoples, a nose turned upward and flattened at the end. Her mouth was wide, her chin small, her hands and arms red, her feet large and strong, like those of a peasant. Though constantly exposed to the harsh and drying winds and to the action of the sun and air, her complexion was pale, like that of a wilted plant. But this paleness made the face interesting at the first glance; and she had so sweet an expression in her blue eyes, such grace in her movements, and in her voice so much soul, that notwithstanding the discrepancy between her features and the qualities Benassis had attributed to her, the

captain recognized the ailing and capricious creature the doctor had pictured, a prey to the sufferings of a nature balked of its development.

After quickly mending the fire, made of peat and dried twigs, the Fosseuse sat down in the arm-chair, took the unfinished shirt and remained, half-bashful, under the eyes of the officer, not daring to look up, — calm apparently, though the quick heaving of her bosom, the beauty of which Genestas noticed, disclosed her fear.

“Well, my poor child, how are you getting on with your work?” asked Benassis, picking up some pieces of the linen that was destined to become a shirt.

The Fosseuse looked at the doctor with a timid, supplicating air.

“Don’t scold me, monsieur,” she said; “I’ve done nothing to-day, though the shirts were ordered by you for persons who are greatly in need of them. But the weather was so fine I went to walk. I’ve gathered you a quantity of mushrooms and some white truffles, which I carried to Jacquotte. She was very glad to get them, for it seems you have people to dinner. I was so glad that I guessed right; something told me to go and gather them.” And she began to sew.

“You have a very pretty house, mademoiselle,” said Genestas.

“It is not mine, monsieur,” she answered, looking at the stranger with eyes that seemed to blush, “it belongs to Monsieur Benassis.” And she softly turned her eyes upon the doctor.

“You know very well, my child,” he said, taking her hand, “that no one will ever turn you out of it.”

The Fosseuse rose with a hasty movement and left the room.

"Well?" said the doctor to the soldier, "what do you think of her?"

"I must say," answered Genestas, "that she strangely interests me. You have indeed made her a pretty nest."

"Bah! a fifteen or twenty sous paper — well chosen, I admit; that's all. The furniture does not amount to much; it was all made by my basket-maker, who wished to show his gratitude. The Fosseuse herself made the curtains with a few yards of calico. The house and its simple fittings strike you as pretty because you see them on a mountain slope, in a lonely region where you did not expect to find any fitness of things. The secret of this charm is in the sort of harmony which reigns between the house and Nature which has brought together the brooks and a few well-grouped trees, and has carpeted the little lawn with her finest grasses, her fragrant strawberry-plants, and the pretty violets — Well, what was the matter?" he added, addressing the Fosseuse, who now returned.

"Nothing, nothing," she answered; "I thought one of my hens was missing."

She was not telling the truth, but the doctor alone noticed it. He whispered in her ear, —

"You have been crying?"

"Why do you say those things to me before other people?" she answered.

"Mademoiselle," said Genestas, "you make a great mistake by living here alone; in such a pretty cage as this you ought to have a husband."

"That is true," she said, "but how can it be helped? I am poor, and I am difficult to please. I don't feel inclined to carry a man's dinner to the fields; nor to drag a hand-cart; nor to feel the poverty of those I might love, and be unable to remove it; nor yet to hold children in my arms all day, and mend a man's ragged clothing. Monsieur le curé tells me such thoughts are not Christian. I know that; but what's to be done? Some days I would rather eat dry bread than have to prepare my dinner. Would you have me burden a man with my defects? He might wear himself out trying to satisfy my caprices; and that would n't be just. Bah! fate has flung me a hard lot, and I must carry it alone."

"Besides, she was born a do-nothing, my poor Fosseuse," said Benassis, "and we must take her as she is. But what she tells you only means she has never loved any one yet," he added, laughing.

Then he rose, and went out a moment on the lawn.

"You must love Monsieur Benassis very much," Genestas said to the young girl.

"Oh, yes, monsieur! and there are many people in the district, like myself, who would gladly cut themselves in pieces for him. But he who cures others has something within himself that nothing can cure. You are his friend; perhaps you know what it is? Who could have wounded a man like him? — the true image of the good God upon earth! I know many here who believe their wheat grows better if he has passed by the fields."

"And you, do you believe it?"

"I, monsieur, when I have seen him —" She seemed to hesitate, then she added, "I am happy for the rest

of the day." She bowed her head, and began to ply her needle with singular deftness.

"Well, has the captain been telling you tales of Napoleon?" asked the doctor, re-entering.

"Has monsieur ever seen the Emperor?" cried the Fosseuse, gazing into the face of the officer with passionate curiosity.

"Bless me! yes," said Genestas, "a thousand times!"

"Ah! I wish I could know something about the army!"

"Perhaps to-morrow we will come and take our morning coffee with you, and then you shall hear 'something about the army,' my child," said Benassis, taking her by the neck and kissing her brow. "She is my daughter," he added, turning to Genestas. "If I have not kissed her on the forehead I miss something from my daily life."

The Fosseuse pressed his hand, and said in a low voice, "Oh, how good you are!" They left her, but she followed to see them mount. When Genestas was in the saddle, she whispered in Benassis's ear, "Who is he?"

"Ha! ha!" replied the doctor, putting his foot in the stirrup, "a husband for you, perhaps."

She remained standing, and watched them as they rode down the winding way. When they had passed below the garden they saw her, perched on a heap of stones, and watching still to give them a last nod.

"Monsieur, there is something very extraordinary about that girl," said Genestas to the doctor, when they were at some distance from the house.

"Yes, is there not? I have told myself a score of times that she would make a charming wife; but I cannot love her otherwise than as we love a sister or a mother; my heart is dead."

"Has she any relations?" asked Genestas. "Who were her father and mother?"

"Oh, it is quite a history," said Benassis. "She has neither father nor mother nor relatives. Her very name has an interest for me. The Fosseuse was born in this village. Her father, a laborer of Saint-Laurent du Pont, was called the Fosseur, no doubt an abbreviation of *foss-oyeur*, because the office of grave-digger had been from time immemorial in his family. There is all the gloom of a cemetery in that name. According to an old Roman custom, still used here as in other parts of France, which consists in giving to women the names of their husbands, with the feminine termination of the words, this girl is called the Fosseuse from Fosseur, her father's name. The laborer married, for love, the lady's maid of a certain countess, whose property is not many miles from this district. Here, as in most country regions, the passion of love counts for little in marriage. As a general thing the peasant wants a wife to bear him children, to make him good soup and bring it to the fields, to spin the cloth for his shirts, and mend his coats. For a long time, no such event as a marriage for love had happened in this valley, where it often happens that a young man will leave his betrothed for some richer girl who has three or four more acres of land. The fate of the Fosseur and his wife was not sufficiently happy to wean the country-people from such selfish calculations. La Fosseuse, the mother, was a

handsome woman, who died in giving birth to her daughter. The husband took his loss so much to heart that he was dead within a year, leaving nothing whatever to his child but her feeble and precarious life. The little girl was charitably cared for by a neighbor, who brought her up till she was nine years old ; by that time, her support became too heavy an expense for the worthy woman, and the child was sent to beg on the highroad at the season of the year when travellers pass this way. It happened that the orphan begged at the château of the countess, and was kept there in memory of her mother. She was trained to become in time the waiting-maid of the daughter of the house, who was married five years later. Meantime, the poor child fell a victim to the caprices of rich people, who for the most part are neither gracious nor consistent in their generosity ; benevolent by fits and starts, now patrons, then friends, often masters, they make the already false position of orphan children in whom they take an interest, still more false ; they thoughtlessly toy with their hearts and lives and future careers, regarding them as of little account. The Fosseuse became at first almost the companion of the young heiress ; she was taught to read and write, and her future mistress sometimes amused herself by giving the girl music lessons. By turns lady's-maid and companion, her masters made an incomplete being of her. She contracted a taste for luxury and fine clothes, and acquired manners that were out of keeping with her real position. Since then, misfortunes have harshly tutored her spirit, but they have never effaced its sense of belonging to a better destiny. At last, one day, one fatal day, the young

countess, then married, discovered the girl, who by that time was only her waiting-maid, decked out in one of her ball-dresses and dancing before a glass. The orphan, just sixteen years old, was pitilessly sent away. Her indolence drove her back into poverty; she wandered about the roads, begging or working in the manner I told you. Often she thought of jumping into the water, — sometimes of giving herself to the first-comer; the greater part of the time she lay in the sun at the foot of a wall, thoughtful and gloomy, with her head in the grass. Travellers used to fling her a few sous, just because she asked for nothing. For a whole year she was in the hospital at Annecy, after a laborious harvest, at which she had worked beyond her strength in the hope of killing herself. You should hear her tell of her feelings and ideas during this period of her life; her confidences are often very curious. She came back to this valley about the time I resolved to settle here. Wishing to understand the *morale* of all my people, I studied her character, which interested me; then, after discovering her organic imperfections, I resolved to take care of the poor girl. Perhaps in time she will get accustomed to work at her needle; but in any case, I have made a provision for her."

"She is very lonely up there," said Genestas.

"No," replied Benassis; "one of my shepherd-women sleeps in her house. You did not notice my farm buildings which are above the house, for they are hidden among the fir-trees. Oh, she is perfectly safe. Besides, we have no lawless fellows in our valley; if, by chance, one turns up, I send him to the army; they make excellent soldiers."

"Poor girl!" said Genestas.

"The country-people don't pity her," replied the doctor. "On the contrary, they think her very fortunate. There's this difference between her and the other women, only they can't see it, — to them God has given strength, to her weakness."

As the two riders emerged upon the new road to Grenoble, Benassis, who foresaw its effect upon Genestas, reined up, with a satisfied look, to enjoy his surprise. Two walls of verdure, sixty feet high, bordered, as far as the eye could reach, a wide road raised and rounded in the middle like the gravel-walk of a garden, and made a natural monument which any man might well be proud to have created. Each tree, left untrimmed, took the shape of the enormous green palm which makes the Lombardy poplar one of the finest specimens of vegetation. One side of the road, which was already in shadow, resembled a vast rampart of black foliage; while the other, strongly lighted by the setting sun which touched the young shoots with tints of gold, offered in contrast a play of light and its reflections, as the sunshine and the breeze touched the swaying curtain of leaves.

"You must be very happy here," cried Genestas. "There is so much to give you pleasure."

"Monsieur," said Benassis, "the love of nature is the only love which does not disappoint our human hopes. Here there are no deceptions. These poplars are only ten years old; but did you ever see any better grown?"

"God is great!" said the soldier, stopping in the middle of the road, of which he could see neither the beginning nor the end.

"You do me good," said the doctor. "It gives me pleasure to hear you say what I so often think in the middle of this avenue. Surely, there is something religious in this spot. We are two specks as we stand here, and the sense of our littleness brings us back to God."

They rode slowly and in silence, listening to the foot-fall of their horses, which sounded along the verdant gallery as if they were pacing under the vaults of a cathedral.

"How many emotions there are of which city people know nothing," said the doctor. "Do you smell the odors exhaled by the gum of the poplars and the young shoots of the larch? how delicious!"

"Listen!" exclaimed Genestas; "wait a moment."

They heard a song in the distance.

"Is it a woman, or a man, or a bird?" said the captain in a low voice; "or is it the voice of the glorious scenery?"

"It is something of them all," replied the doctor, dismounting and fastening his horse to the branch of a poplar.

He signed to the officer to do as he did, and to follow him. They walked slowly along a footpath, between hedges of hawthorn white with bloom that shed its penetrating perfume on the moist evening atmosphere. The sunbeams poured into the narrow way with a sort of impetuosity, which the shadows cast by the tall curtain of poplars made all the more perceptible; the vigorous jets of light enveloping in ruddy tints a cottage placed at the farther end of the sandy pathway. A dust of gold seemed scattered on its thatched roof,

usually brown like the shell of a horse-chestnut, and whose ragged eaves were green with house-leeks and various mosses. The cottage itself could scarcely be seen in the haze of light; the old walls, the door, and all about it had a fugitive glory; all was accidentally beautiful, as the human face is sometimes seen to be under the influence of a passion that warms and colors it. In the free life of the open air we meet with fleeting sylvan loveliness which snatches from our hearts the wish of the apostle when he said to Jesus on the mountain, "Let us build here our tabernacle." Nature at this moment seemed to have a voice as pure and sweet as she herself is pure and sweet; but the voice was sad, like the sun-gleams that were dropping westward, — vague images of death, divine warning given by the sun in the heavens, as the flowers and the pretty ephemeral insects give it upon earth. At this hour the tints of the sky are full of sadness, and the voice was sad. It sang a popular song, a song of love and of regret, that roused the national hatred of France against England until Beaumarchais restored its poetic value, and placed it on the French stage in the mouth of a page opening his heart to his godmother. The air was sung without words, in plaintive tones, by a voice which vibrated on the soul and moved it to pity.

"The swan's song!" said Benassis. "Not twice in a generation does that song reach the ears of man. Make haste, I must stop it. The child is killing himself; it is cruel to listen any longer — Hush! Jacques, hush!" cried the doctor.

The song ceased. Genestas stood still, motionless and bewildered. A cloud obscured the sun; the land-

scape and the voice were mute together. Cold shadows and silence succeeded the soft splendors of light, the warm breath of the atmosphere, and the song of the child.

"Why do you disobey me?" said Benassis. "I will give you no more rice-cakes, no more snail-soup, or fresh dates, or white bread. Do you want to die, and leave your poor mother all alone?"

Genestas advanced into a little courtyard, kept tolerably clean, and saw a boy of fifteen, feeble as a woman, blonde in complexion, with scarcely any hair, and a color in his cheeks that looked like rouge. He rose slowly from the bench where he had been sitting under a tall jasmine and some lilac-bushes, which grew wild and had nearly covered him with their foliage.

"You know," continued the doctor, "that I told you to go to bed before the sun, and not expose yourself to the evening air; and also not to talk: why, then, do you sing?"

"But, Monsieur Benassis, it is very warm here; and it is so good to be warm. I am always cold. I felt so comfortable that I never thought; I began to sing *Malbroug s'en va-t-en guerre*, just for amusement, and then I listened to myself, for my voice is exactly like the pipe of your shepherd."

"Well, my poor Jacques, don't do it again; do you hear? Give me your hand."

The doctor felt his pulse. The boy's blue eyes were habitually gentle, but fever now made them brilliant.

"Ah, I knew it; you are in a perspiration," said Benassis; "is your mother here?"

"No, monsieur."

The sick lad, followed by Benassis and the captain, entered the cottage.

"Light a candle, Captain Bluteau," said the doctor, as he helped Jacques to take off his coarse and ragged clothing.

When Genestas had lighted the room he was struck with the excessive thinness of the lad, who was nothing more than skin and bone. After the little peasant was put to bed, Benassis tapped his chest and listened to the noise his fingers made; then, having noted those sounds of evil augury, he drew the bedclothes over the boy, stood a few feet away, and watched him.

"How do you feel, my little man?"

"Quite well, monsieur."

Benassis placed a little table with four turned legs beside the bed, looked for a glass and phial that were on the mantel-shelf, and made a drink by pouring into some water a few drops of a brown liquid contained in the phial, which he measured carefully by the light of the candle held by Genestas.

"Your mother is late in coming home."

"Here she comes now, monsieur; I hear her step on the path."

The doctor and the officer waited and looked about them. At the foot of the bed lay a mattress of dry moss, without sheets or covering, on which the mother no doubt slept in her clothes. Genestas pointed to this couch, and Benassis gently inclined his head as if to say that he had already admired the motherly devotion. The clattering of wooden shoes sounded in the courtyard, and Benassis went out to meet the woman.

"You must sit up with Jacques to-night, mère Colas.

If he says he is suffocating, give him the drink I have left in a glass on the table. Be careful not to let him have more than two or three swallows at a time. The quantity in the glass ought to last all night. Above all, don't touch the phial. Begin by changing the boy's clothing. He has been in a perspiration."

"I have n't had time to wash his shirts to-day, my dear monsieur. I had to carry my hemp to Grenoble to get some money."

"Well, I'll send you some shirts."

"Is he worse, my poor lad?" said the woman.

"We can't expect him to be better, *mère Colas*. He has had the imprudence to sing; but don't scold him, don't speak harshly to him, take courage. If Jacques complains very much send a neighbor to fetch me. Adieu."

The doctor called to his companion, and they returned along the path.

"Is that peasant lad consumptive?" asked Genestas.

"Yes, indeed he is," answered Benassis. "Science can't save him, unless through some miracle of nature. The professors at the School of Medicine in Paris used to tell us about the phenomenon you have just witnessed. Certain forms of the disease produce changes in the voice which give the victims a momentary faculty of emitting vocal sounds whose perfection is never attained by any virtuoso. I have made you spend a melancholy day, monsieur," said the doctor, when he had mounted. "On all sides suffering, on all sides death, but also resignation. Country-people die philosophically; they suffer, they say nothing, they crouch down as the beasts do. But don't let us talk of death

any more ; we will ride faster. I want to get back to the village before dark, so that you may see the new quarter."

"Hey! there's a fire somewhere," said Genestas, pointing to a part of the mountain where a tongue of flame was shooting up.

"It is harmless. Our lime-burner is probably lighting his kiln. That industry, which is new here, utilizes the heaths."

The sudden report of a gun was heard. Benassis let an involuntary exclamation escape him, and said, with a gesture of impatience, —

"If that is Butifer, we'll soon see which of us is the stronger."

"The shot came from over there," said Genestas, pointing to a beechwood situated above them on the mountain; "trust the ears of an old soldier."

"Let's get there quickly," cried Benassis, heading in a straight line for the little wood, and sending his horse at full speed over the fields and ditches as though he were riding a steeple-chase, — so anxious was he to catch the offender in the act.

"The man you are after is running away," cried Genestas, barely able to keep up with the doctor.

Benassis wheeled his horse round, retraced his steps, and the man he was pursuing presently showed himself on a projecting crag some hundred feet above the riders.

"Butifer," said Benassis, observing the man's long gun, "come down."

Butifer recognized the doctor, and responded by a friendly and respectful gesture implying perfect obedience.

"I can imagine," said Genestas, "that a man under the influence of fear, or some other violent sentiment, could climb up that point of rock; but how can he ever get down again?"

"I am not uneasy," answered Benassis; "the goats ought to be jealous of that fellow. You'll see."

Accustomed, through his experience of war, to judge of the intrinsic value of men, the captain admired the singular agility and graceful precision of all Butifer's movements, as he came down the broken face of the rock he had so audaciously scaled. The lithe and vigorous body of the hunter balanced itself easily in all the positions which the steep ridges of the precipice compelled it to take; the foot was planted on an edge of rock as tranquilly as on a floor, so sure did the man seem of being able to make his footing good; and he managed his long gun as though it were a cane. Butifer was a young man of medium height, thin, spare, and sinewy, whose virile beauty impressed Genestas when he stood beside him. He belonged to the class of smugglers who ply their trade without violence, and employ only craft and patience to cheat the revenue. His face was manly, and much burned by the sun. His eyes, of a clear yellow, gleamed like those of an eagle, to whose beak his slim nose, slightly curved at the end, bore a strong resemblance. His cheek-bones were covered with down. His red mouth, half-open, disclosed teeth of dazzling whiteness. His beard, his mustache, his red whiskers—which he had allowed to grow and which curled naturally—intensified the virile and indomitable expression of his features. In him, all denoted strength. The muscles of his hands, continually exercised, had a

size and solidity which were remarkable. His chest was broad; his brow bore the signs of an untutored intellect. He had the intrepid and resolute, though quiet air of a man who was accustomed to risk his life, and who had so often exercised his bodily or his intellectual powers in perils of all kinds that he no longer felt the least doubt of himself. He was dressed in a blouse torn by the briers, and wore leathern soles bound to his feet by strips of eelskin; a pair of blue trousers, pieced and slashed open, exposed to sight his red legs, lean, wiry, and active as those of a deer.

"You see the man who once shot at me," said Benassis in a low voice to the soldier. "If now I expressed a wish to be rid of any one he would kill him without hesitation. Butifer," continued the doctor, addressing the poacher, "I thought you a man of honor, and I pledged my word for you because you had pledged yours to me. My promise to the *procureur-du-roi* at Grenoble rested on yours that you would hunt no more; that you would settle down and work and live prudently. It was you who fired that shot,—here, on land belonging to the Comte de Labranchoir. Hein! suppose his game-keeper had heard it, foolish man? It is lucky for you, I won't indict you, for this is not your first offence, and you have no license to carry arms. Didn't I let you keep your gun simply because I knew your affection for it?"

"It is a beauty," said the captain, recognizing a duck-gun from the manufactory at Saint-Étienne on the Loire.

The poacher looked up at Genestas as if to thank him for his approbation.

"Butifer," continued Benassis, "your conscience ought to reproach you. If you recommence your old courses, you'll find yourself cornered some day in a park enclosed with walls. No protection can then save you from the galleys; you'll be branded, disgraced. Bring me your gun this very night, I'll take care of it for you."

Butifer clasped the stock of his treasure with a convulsive movement.

"You are right, monsieur le maire," he said. "I have done wrong; I have broken my pledge; I'm a dog. My gun must go to you, but you will get it as a legacy. The last shot fired by the child of my mother goes through my brain. I can't help it; I have done as you wished; I have kept quiet all winter; but in the spring the sap rises. I don't know how to dig; I haven't got the heart to spend my life fattening chickens; and I can't bend my spine to spade vegetables, nor lash the air driving carts, nor live in a stable and rub down a horse's hide: must I therefore perish of hunger?—I can't live, except up there," he said, after a pause, pointing to the mountains. "I've been out a week. I saw a chamois, and the chamois is there," he added, nodding at the crag. "It is at your service. My good Monsieur Benassis, let me keep my gun. Listen, on my word of honor I'll leave the district; I'll go to the Alps, where the chamois hunters won't say me nay,—on the contrary, they'll welcome me with pleasure; and I shall perish on a glacier. To tell the honest truth, I would rather live a year or two on the heights, away from governments, and revenue-officers, and gamekeepers, and prosecutors, than grovel

in your bogs for a hundred years. There's no one but you that I'd regret to leave; all the others weary my life out. When you are in the right, you at least don't attack others tooth and nail."

"And Louise?" said Benassis.

Butifer was silent and thoughtful.

"Hey! my lad," cried Genestas, "learn to read and write, join my regiment, ride a horse, and be a carabineer. If the 'boot and saddle' ever sounds for a real war, you'll see that the good God meant you to live in the midst of cannon, and shot, and battles. You'll come to be a general!"

"Yes, if Napoleon would return," said Butifer.

"You remember our agreement?" said the doctor. "You promised to become a soldier at your second outbreak. I give you six months to learn to read and write, and then I shall find some young fellow of family who wants a substitute."

Butifer looked at the mountains.

"Oh! you can't go to the Alps," cried Benassis. "A man like you, a man of honor, full of noble qualities, ought to serve his country and command a brigade, and not die at the tail of a chamois. The life you lead will land you in the galleys. Your tremendous exertions will force you to take long rests; and after a while you'll contract the vices of a lazy life, which will destroy all your ideas of order, and lead you to abuse your own health and punish yourself; I want, in spite of yourself, to put you in the right way."

"Must I die a lingering death of disgust and weariness? I stifle in a city. I can't bear more than one day in Grenoble when I take Louise there."

"We all have inclinations which we must learn to fight if we mean to be useful to our fellows. But it is getting late, and I'm in a hurry. You must come and see me to-morrow, and bring your gun; we will talk it all over, my son. Adieu. Sell your chamois at Grenoble."

"That's what I call a man," said Genestas, as they rode on.

"A man with his feet on a bad road," answered Benassis. "But what can one do? You heard him. Isn't it deplorable to see a man with such fine qualities throw himself away? If an enemy were to invade France, Butifer at the head of a hundred young fellows could hold a division in the Maurienne for a month; but in times of peace he can only spend his energy in braving the laws. He needs some force or other to overcome; when he is not risking his life, he is fighting society and helping the smugglers. That fellow will cross the Rhone by himself in a little boat to carry shoes into Savoie; he can escape, heavily laden, to inaccessible peaks, where he is able to live for a couple of days on a crust. He loves danger as another man loves sleep. By dint of enjoying pleasures which give him intense sensations he has put himself outside of the interests of every-day life. Now, I am not willing that such a man, by following the unconscious tendency of such a life, should become a brigand and die on the scaffold. But see, captain, how the village looks from here."

Genestas saw in the distance a large square planted with trees, in the middle of which was a fountain surrounded by poplars. The outer circle of this open ground was defined by slopes, on which three tiers of

trees of different species were planted, — first acacias, then the Japanese ailanthus, lastly, to crown the bank, some small elms.

“That is the ground where we hold our fairs,” said Benassis. “The main street begins with the two good houses of which I spoke to you, — that of the justice of the peace and the notary.”

They now entered a wide street rather neatly paved with cobble-stones, on either side of which about a hundred new houses had been built; all of them separated by gardens. The church, whose portico made a pretty perspective, closed the end of this street, from the centre of which two others had lately been laid out, where several houses were already built. The *mairie*, situated on an open square near the church, was opposite the parsonage. As Benassis rode forward, women, children, and men whose day's work was over, came out on their doorsteps. Some took off their caps to him, others bade him good-evening; the little children jumped about his horse, as if the kindness of the animal were as well known to them as that of its master. The scene was one of mute or murmured gladness that, like all deep sentiments, had its own reserves, and its communicative attraction. Genestas thought, as he noted the welcome that was proffered to the doctor, that the latter had been too modest in the account he had given over-night of the affection felt for him in the district. It was indeed the sweetest of royalties, — one whose divine rights are written on the hearts of the subjects; a royalty that is real. However dazzling the rays of the power or the glory a man enjoys, his soul soon gauges the satisfactions that all external action procures

for him ; he perceives his real nothingness when he finds nothing changed, nothing new, nothing grander in the exercise of his physical faculties. Kings may possess the earth, but they are forced, like other men, to live in a little circle and submit to its laws ; and their happiness depends on the personal impressions they receive. Throughout his district Benassis met with nothing but obedience and friendship.



CHAPTER III.

THE NAPOLEON OF THE PEOPLE.

"Do pray come, monsieur," cried Jacquotte; "these gentlemen have been waiting for you such a time. But that's always the way! you spoil my dinner when it ought to be particularly good. It is all sodden by this time."

"Well, well, here we are," said Benassis, laughing.

The riders dismounted and entered the *salon*, where the guests invited by the doctor were assembled.

"Messieurs," said he, taking Genestas by the hand, "I have the honor to present to you Monsieur Bluteau, captain of a regiment of cavalry in garrison at Grenoble, —an old soldier, who has promised to stay some time among us."

Then, addressing Genestas, he motioned to a tall, thin old man with gray hair, dressed in black, and said: "This is Monsieur Dufau, the justice of the peace of whom I spoke to you, and who has so greatly contributed to the prosperity of this district. This gentleman," he continued, taking Genestas up to a pale young man of medium height, also dressed in black, and who wore spectacles, "is Monsieur Tonnelet, the son-in-law of Monsieur Gravier, the first notary who settled in the village." Then, turning to a stout man, half-peasant, half-bourgeois, with a coarse, blotched

face, that was, however, full of good-humor, "This," he said, "is Monsieur Cambon, my worthy associate, and the wood-merchant to whom I owe the good-will this community has bestowed upon me. He is one of the projectors of the new road which you admired so much. I need not," added Benassis, motioning towards the curate, "tell you the profession of this gentleman. You see a man whom no one can help loving."

The countenance of the priest attracted the attention of the soldier by an expression of moral beauty whose seduction was irresistible. At first sight, the face might seem ill-favored, for the lines were rugged and severe. The slight figure, its emaciation, its attitude, all told of great physical weakness; but the countenance, always placid, testified to the deep inward peace of a Christian, and the strength begotten by chastity of soul. His eyes, which seemed to reflect the skies, revealed the inextinguishable fires of charity which consumed his heart. His gestures, infrequent and natural, were those of a modest man, and his movements had the virgin simplicity of a young girl's. His presence inspired respect and a vague desire for closer relations to him.

"Ah, monsieur le maire!" he said, bending as if to escape the praise Benassis bestowed upon him.

The tones of his voice stirred the soldier to his very centre, and the few words uttered by this unknown man threw him into a reverie that was almost religious.

"Messieurs," said Jacquotte, coming into the very middle of the room, and standing with her hands on her hips, "the soup is on the table."

Invited by the doctor, who called each in turn, to

avoid the ceremonies of precedence, the five guests passed into the dining-room and sat down at table, after listening to the Benedicite, which the curate recited in a low voice, without emphasis. The table was covered with a cloth of the double damask invented in the days of Henry IV. by the brothers Graindorge, — clever manufacturers, who gave their name to the heavy fabric so well known to housekeepers. The linen, of dazzling whiteness, smelt of the thyme which Jacquotte put into her washtubs. The dinner-service was white porcelain with a blue edge, in perfect preservation. The decanters had the antique octagon shape which in these days is found only in the provinces. The handles of the knives were of carved horn, and each represented a grotesque figure. These relics of a past luxury, which were nevertheless almost new, seemed in keeping with the frankness and warm-heartedness of the master of the house. The attention of Genestas was arrested for a moment by the cover of the soup-tureen, topped by a bunch of vegetables in high relief, and very well colored after the manner of Bernard Palissy, a celebrated potter and enameller of the sixteenth century.

The assembled company was not wanting in originality. The powerful heads of Benassis and Genestas contrasted admirably with the apostolic head of Monsieur Janvier, just as the withered faces of the justice of the peace and the assistant-mayor threw the younger face of the notary into relief. Society seemed to be represented by these diverse physiognomies, all bearing signs of inward contentment, satisfaction in the present, and faith in the future. Monsieur Tonnelet and

Monsieur Janvier, less advanced in life, liked to search into the events of the future, which they felt belonged to them; the other guests preferred to keep the conversation to the past; but all looked with serious eyes upon the things of life, and their opinions reflected a double tinge of melancholy; one side had the pallor of the evening twilight, the memory, nearly effaced, of joys that never could return; the other, like the dawn, gave promise of another day.

"You must be very tired to-night, monsieur le curé," said Monsieur Cambon.

"Yes, monsieur," answered Monsieur Janvier, "the funeral of the poor crétin and that of Père Pelletier were at different hours."

"We can now pull down the hovels of the old village," said Benassis to his associate. "To clear away these houses will bring us in at least as much as an acre of fields. The district will also save the hundred francs it cost to support Claude the crétin."

"We ought to put that hundred francs for the next three years into building a bridge with one arch over the great brook on the lower road," said Monsieur Cambon. "The people of the village, and of the valley too, have a habit of crossing the land of Jean François Pastureau, and they will end by spoiling it in a way to injure the poor man."

"Certainly," said the justice of the peace, "the money could not be better applied. To my thinking, the abuses of the right of way are one of the great evils in the country. A tenth of all the suits brought in the courts relates to this abuse; it attacks, almost with impunity, the rights of property in very many districts.

Respect for property and respect for law are sentiments too often ignored ; it is necessary to promulgate them. Many persons think it dishonorable to lend assistance to the law, and the saying, 'go and get hanged elsewhere,' which has passed into a proverb, and seems based on a feeling of laudable generosity, is, at bottom, only a hypocritical formula which serves to gloss over our own egotism. We are — and we had better avow it — wanting in patriotism. The true patriot is the citizen who is sufficiently convinced of the importance of the laws to insist on their being executed, even at his own risk and peril. Let an evil-doer go free, and we make ourselves guilty of his future crimes."

"All things hang together," said Benassis. "If the mayors kept the roads in good repair the people would make no by-paths. If common councils were better educated they would stand by the owners of property and the mayors whenever they oppose an unjust right of way: all should unite to make ignorant persons see that castle, field, cottage, and tree are equally sacred, and that the question of Right is not affected by the different values of property. But such ideas cannot be forced ; they depend on the moral state of the population, and we cannot completely reform that without the efficacious assistance of the curates. This is not addressed to you, Monsieur Janvier."

"I don't take it to myself," said the curate, laughing. "Is n't my heart set on making Catholic doctrine chime with your administrative creed ? I often endeavor in my pastoral teachings as to theft to inculcate the very ideas you have uttered on the matter of *right*. God does not measure the theft by the value of the

thing stolen ; he judges the thief. That has been gist of the parables I try to adapt to the intelligence of my parishioners."

"You have succeeded, monsieur le curé," said Cambron. "I can judge of the changes you have worked in the minds of the people, by comparing the present state of the district with its past. Certainly there are few neighborhoods where the working-men are as scrupulous as they are here in giving their full hours of labor. The cattle are better cared for, and do no damage unless accidentally. The woods are respected. In short, you have made our peasantry understand that the leisure of the rich is the reward of a thrifty and serious life."

"If that is so, monsieur le curé," said Genestas, "you ought to be well pleased with your flock."

"Monsieur," said the priest, "we can't expect to find angels here below. Wherever there is poverty there is suffering. Suffering and poverty are living forces, which have their abuses just as power has. When a peasant has six miles to walk to his daily work, and returns weary in the evening, only to see a sportsman cutting across fields and meadows to get the sooner to his dinner, do you think he can have much scruple in doing likewise ? Of those who seize a right of way, about which you were complaining just now, who is the delinquent ? — the man who works, or he who amuses himself ? The rich and the poor both bring evil upon us in these days, the one as much as the other. Faith, like power, should descend from the celestial and the social heights above us ; nevertheless, in our time, the upper classes have less faith than

the body of the people, to whom God promises in a future life a compensation for their woes in this, if they bear them patiently. While I submit to ecclesiastical discipline, and defer to the opinions of my superiors, I nevertheless think that for a long time to come we ought to be less exacting in matters of doctrine, and endeavor to bring the religious sentiment back into the heart, here, in this land, where men are discussing Christianity instead of practising its maxims. The philosophism of the rich has been a fatal example to the poor, and the cause of long interregnums in the kingdom of God. The power that we gain to-day over our flocks depends entirely on our personal influence. Is it not a misfortune that the faith of a district is owing to the respect felt for one man? When Christianity has again fertilized the social system by impregnating all classes with its essential principles, its worship will no longer be called in question. The worship of a religion is its outward form; societies only exist by forms and signs. To you the banner, to us the cross."

"Monsieur le curé," said Genestas, "I should like to know why you prevent these poor people from dancing on Sunday."

"Monsieur," answered the curé, "we do not dislike dancing in itself; we only forbid it as being one cause of the immorality which disturbs the peace and corrupts the manners of the country. If we purify the spirit of family, and insist on the sacredness of its bonds, do we not cut off the evil at its roots?"

"I know," said Monsieur Tonnelet, "that disorders must be expected in all districts, but in ours they are becoming rare. If some of our peasants have no scru-

ple in cheating a neighbor of a furrow of earth when they till it, or in cutting the osiers of another man when they want them, at least these things are mere peccadilloes compared to the sins of the city-folk. I think the peasants of this valley are very religious."

"Oh, religious!" said the curate, smiling; "fanaticism is not to be dreaded here."

"But, monsieur le curé," said Cambon, "if all the villagers went to mass, and confessed to you once a week, how could they cultivate the land? moreover, you would need three priests, instead of one, to attend to your duties."

"Monsieur," returned the curate, "labor is prayer. The practice of duty carries with it a knowledge of the religious principles that are the life of societies."

"What do you make of patriotism?" asked Genestas.

"Patriotism," replied the curate, gravely, "inspires only transient emotions; religion renders them lasting. Patriotism is a momentary forgetfulness of self-interest; Christianity is a complete system of opposition to the depraved tendencies of mankind."

"And yet, monsieur, during the wars of the Revolution —"

"Yes, during the Revolution we did marvels," said Benassis, interrupting Genestas; "but twenty years later, in 1814, our patriotism was already dead; whereas France and Europe have flung themselves upon Asia twelve times in a hundred years, — driven to it by religious sentiment."

"Perhaps," said the justice of the peace, "it is easy to make terms with the selfish interests which are at the bottom of the struggles of nation against nation, whereas

the religious wars undertaken for the maintenance of dogma, the object of which can never be precise, are necessarily interminable."

"Monsieur! you are not serving the fish," said Jacquotte, who, aided by Nicolle, was waiting on table.

Faithful to her usual custom, the cook brought in each dish by itself, one after the other, — a fashion which has the inconvenience of obliging gastronomes to eat a great deal, while moderate people, whose hunger has been appeased by the first dishes, are compelled to leave the choice ones untouched.

"Oh, monsieur," said the priest to the justice of the peace, "how can you assert that the religious wars had no distinct purpose? Formerly, religion was so powerful a bond in society that material interests could not be separated from religious questions. Every soldier knew for what he was fighting."

"If they fought so often for religion, God must have built that structure very imperfectly," said Genestas. "A divine institution ought to convince the minds of men by its inherent quality of truth, ought it not?"

All the guests looked at the curate.

"Messieurs," said Monsieur Janvier, "religion is to be felt, not defined. We cannot judge the means nor the ends of the Almighty."

"From that point of view, a man must believe in all your genuflections!" said Genestas, in the jovial tone of an old soldier, little accustomed to think of God.

"Monsieur," said the priest gravely, "the Catholic religion brings human cares and perplexities to a safe

end. But were it otherwise, I might still ask what you risk in believing its truths?"

"Not much," said Genestas.

"Well; and what do you not risk by believing nothing? However, let us speak of the earthly interests which more nearly touch you. See how strongly the finger of God is imprinted on the things of life by the hand of his vicar. Men have lost much in wandering from the paths marked out by Christianity. The Church, whose history few people take the trouble to read, and which they judge by certain erroneous opinions designedly spread abroad among the masses, offers that perfect model of government which men are searching for to-day. The principle of election has long made the Church a great political power. Formerly, there was not a single religious institution that was not based on liberty and equality. All vocations co-operated in the work. The heads of colleges, abbés, bishops, the general of the order, and the Pope himself were conscientiously chosen to meet the needs of the Church. They gave expression to its idea; blind obedience was therefore their due. I refrain from speaking of the social benefits of that idea,—an idea which has made the modern nations, which has inspired so many poems, cathedrals, statues, pictures, and musical works,—and I will only ask you to observe that your general elections, trial by jury, and the two Chambers have their roots in provincial and œcumenical councils, in the episcopate, and the college of cardinals,—with this difference, as it seems to me, that the present philosophical ideas on civilization pale before the sublime and divine idea of Catholic communion, the type of a universal social

communion, brought about by the Word and by the Deed united under the control of religious truth. It will be difficult for the new political systems, however perfect they are held to be, to do again the marvellous works of the ages in which the Church controlled the human intellect."

"Why so?" asked Genestas.

"Because, in the first place, election, to become a principle, requires absolute equality in the electors, they must be 'equal quantities,' to use a geometrical expression, and that equality modern politics can never obtain. Moreover, the great things of social existence can only be done by the power of such sentiments as are able to unite men, and modern philosophy has based the laws on personal interests, which isolate them. Formerly, far more than at present, men were found among the nations who were generously inspired by a maternal sense of the unrecognized rights and sufferings of the masses. Thus the priest, child of the middle classes, opposed the material forces of the world, and protected the people from their oppressors. The Church has had territorial possessions, but her temporal interests, which, it was thought, would consolidate and strengthen her, have, in the end, weakened her action. Indeed, whenever the priest has privileged property, he appears as an oppressor. If the State pays him, he is servant to the State, and his time, heart, and life belong to it; the citizens regard his virtues as mere duties, and his benevolence, quenched by the doctrine of free-will, dries up in his heart. But if the priest be poor, if he is voluntarily a priest, without other support than his God, without other fortune than the hearts of the

faithful, he becomes the missionary of America, he makes himself an apostle, he is the prince of good : he reigns through destitution, he falls through opulence."

Monsieur Janvier had held the attention of the guests. They remained silent, reflecting on such novel language from the lips of a simple curate.

"Monsieur Janvier, among the truths which you have uttered, there is, I think, one serious error," said Benassis. "I do not like, as you know, to argue about the public interests which are now being discussed by modern writers and authorities. To my thinking, a man who conceives a political system ought, if he is conscious of the power to apply it, to keep silence, lay hold of the necessary authority, and act. But if he remains in the happy obscurity of a private citizen, is it not mere folly to try to convert the masses by individual discussions? Nevertheless, I shall combat you, my dear pastor, because I am now speaking among men of principle, accustomed to put their lights together in the search for truth. My ideas may seem strange to you; but they are the fruit of reflections which the catastrophes of our last forty years have forced upon me. Universal suffrage, demanded by those who form what is called the constitutional opposition, was an excellent principle for the Church, because, as you have just observed, dear pastor, its individuals were educated, disciplined by the religious sentiment, and, one and all, imbued with the same thought, knowing well what they wanted, and whither they went. But the triumph of the ideas under help of which modern liberalism imprudently makes war upon the prosperous government of the Bourbons, will lead to the

ruin of France, and of the liberals themselves. The chiefs of the Left know this. For them the struggle is simply one for the possession of power. If, which God forbid, the bourgeoisie were, under the banner of the opposition, to strike down the social superiorities against which its vanity rebels, its triumph would be at once followed by a struggle between itself and the masses, who would then regard it as a species of nobility, — paltry, it is true, — whose wealth and whose privileges would be all the more obnoxious because the two classes are nearer together. In such a struggle, society, I will not say the nation, will once more perish; for the triumph, always momentary, of the suffering masses brings with it the worst disorders. The battle will be desperate, and without quarter; for it will come of fundamental differences, instinctive or acquired, among the electors, the most numerous and the least enlightened of whom will carry the day against social eminence in a system where votes are counted and not weighed. It follows from this that a government is never more strongly organized, consequently never more perfect, than when it is formed for the defence of a limited Privilege. What I mean by 'privilege' is not the sort of right unrighteously conceded in former times to the few to the injury of the many; no, I mean more particularly the social circle to which the evolutions of power are confined. Power is, as it were, the heart of a State. Nature, in all her creations, shuts in the vital principle to give it greater stamina; so with the body politic. Let me explain my meaning by an example: say that France has a hundred peers; they are a hundred causes of offence and no more. Abolish

the peerage, and at once every rich man becomes a privileged person. Instead of a hundred, you have ten thousand, and you enlarge the sore of social inequalities. In fact, to the working-classes the right to live without working constitutes, in itself, a privilege. In their eyes, those who consume without producing are robbers. They demand visible labor, and take no account of the intellectual productions which enrich them. So, by multiplying their objects of envy, you extend the struggle over all parts of the social body, instead of limiting it to a narrow circle. Whenever the attack and the defence become general over the whole field, the ruin of the nation is imminent. There will always be fewer rich than poor; therefore to the latter victory will belong so soon as the struggle becomes material. And history proves my position. The Roman republic owed its conquest of the world to the institution of senatorial privilege. The senate upheld the idea of power. But as soon as the knights and the new men extended the action of the government, by enlarging the order of the patricians, the national cause was lost. In spite of Sylla, and after Cæsar, Tiberius made Rome an empire, — a system under which power, being concentrated in the hands of one man, gave to that mighty dominion a few more centuries of existence. The emperor was no longer in Rome when the eternal city fell into the hands of barbarians. When our own soil was conquered, the Franks who divided it invented feudal privileges to secure their individual possessions. The hundred, or the thousand chiefs who seized the territory formed their institutions with the object of defending the rights they had won through

conquest. Feudalism lasted just so long as prerogative was restricted within limits. But when the numbers of the privileged class rose from five hundred to fifty thousand there was revolution. The action of their power, by becoming too extended, was without elasticity or strength; and it was also without defence against the acquired liberties of money and thought which it had not foreseen. Therefore the triumph of the bourgeoisie over the monarchical system, which has for its object the increase, in the eyes of the people, of the numbers of the privileged class, will find its inevitable end in the triumph of the masses over the bourgeoisie. When that struggle arises, its weapon in hand will be the right of suffrage, given without restriction to the masses. He who votes, discusses. Authority when discussed does not exist. Can you imagine a society without authority? No. Well then, authority means force; and force rests on a judgment rendered.

"Such," continued Benassis, "are the reasons which have led me to think that the principle of election is one that will prove fatal to the existence of modern governments. I think I have sufficiently proved my attachment to the poor and suffering; I cannot be accused of wishing them ill: but while I admire them in the laborious paths they tread with sublime patience and resignation, I declare my belief that they are incapable of sharing in the work of government. The proletaries seem to me the wards of a nation, to remain always under guardianship. And so, in my opinion, messieurs, the word 'election' is about to cause as much harm as the words 'conscience' and 'liberty,'— words ill-understood and ill-defined, and flung to the

people as the symbols of revolt and the watch-words of destruction. The guardianship of the masses seems to me both just and necessary to the maintenance of society."

"Your system runs atilt against all the ideas of the present day," said Genestas, interrupting the doctor; "and so we have some right to ask for your reasons."

"I will give them willingly, captain."

"What's that the master is saying?" cried Jacquotte, returning to her kitchen. "If the poor dear man is n't advising them to crush down the people, and they are listening to him!"

"I would n't have believed it of Monsieur Benassis!" answered Nicolle.

"If I demand vigorous laws to restrain the ignorant masses," resumed the doctor, after a slight pause, "I also wish the social system to be a light and open network, through which every one who feels within himself the faculty for better things may rise above the crowd. All power aims at its own preservation. To live, governments should, to-day as much as in former days, draw strong men about them, taking such men wherever they can find them, making defenders of them and thus withdrawing from the masses the element of energy which incites them to revolt. By opening to public ambition careers that are both arduous and easy,—arduous to feeble and half-formed desires, easy to vigorous wills,—a State prevents revolutions caused by the obstructions which superiority encounters when seeking to rise to its proper level. Our forty years of national disturbance ought to prove to men of sense that eminence is the consequence of social order.

Eminence is of three kinds, and all are incontestable: eminence of thought, eminence of political gifts, eminence of fortune. Are not these, in other words, art, power, and money, — or, the principle, the means, and the result? Now, if we suppose a clean sweep, a *tabula rasa*, all the social parts absolutely equal, births in the same proportion, and each family owning an equal share of the land, you will soon find the old inequalities of fortune cropping up: and the argument from that flagrant truth is that eminence of fortune, of thought, of power, is a fact that must be submitted to, — a fact which the masses will ever consider oppressive as they see the privileges of the rights so justly acquired. The social contract, resting on this foundation, must therefore ever be a compact between those who possess and those who possess not. According to this principle, the laws will be made by those whom the laws are to benefit; for they have, of course, the instinct of self-preservation and the foresight of danger. They are more interested in the tranquillity of the masses than the masses themselves. What the people wants is happiness ready-made. If you consider society from that standpoint, if you view it in its entirety, you will agree with me that the right of election should only be exercised by men who possess property, power, or intelligence; and you will also admit that their representatives should possess none but extremely limited functions. The legislator, messieurs, ought to be superior to his generation. He takes note of the tendency of public errors, and records the points towards which the ideas of a nation incline; he works more for the future than for the present; more for the generation

that is coming than for the one that is passing away. Now, if you call upon the masses to make the laws, can the masses rise superior to themselves? No. The more faithfully the assembly represents the opinions of the crowd, the less will it understand the true meaning of government, the less elevated will be its views, the less precise, the more vacillating will be its legislation; for the mob is, in France especially, and ever will be, a mob. The law carries with it subjection to rules; all rules are in opposition to natural habits, and to the interests of individuals: will the masses ever consent to make or bear laws against themselves? No. Often the tendency of laws must lie in direct opposition to the tendency of habits and customs. Frame the laws on the habits of a people, and you will give a premium of encouragement, in Spain, to fanaticism and do-nothingism; in England, to the mercantile spirit; in Italy, to the love of arts, destined to express society, but which never can be society itself; in Germany, to nobiliary classifications; and in France, to the spirit of frivolity, to fashions in ideas, to the habit of dividing ourselves into factions by which we are rent to pieces. Look at what has happened in the forty years since the electoral colleges first had a hand in the laws: we have forty thousand laws. A people with forty thousand laws has no law. Can five hundred mediocre intellects—for no generation has more than a hundred great minds at its command—can such intellects have the force to rise above these considerations? No. Men brought from time to time, from five hundred different localities, will never understand the spirit of law in unison: yet law is unity.

“But,” continued the doctor, “I go further still.

Sooner or later a parliament falls under the sceptre of a man, and instead of having the dynasties of kings, you have the ever-changing and costly dynasties of prime ministers. At the bottom of all deliberations we find Mirabeau, Danton, Robespierre, or Napoleon, — proconsuls or an emperor. In fact, it needs a given quantity of force to raise a given quantity of weight. This force can be divided among a more or less large number of levers; but their power must be in proportion to the weight. Now here the weight is the ignorant and suffering mass of beings, which make the base of all societies. Power, being in its nature repressive, has need of great concentration to oppose an equal resistance to the surge of popular movement. That is the application of the principle I stated to you just now, when speaking of the restriction of the government privilege to the few. If you admit men of talent, they bow to this natural law and bring the nation under it; if you assemble men of inferior qualities, they are vanquished sooner or later, by the superior element: the deputy of talent recognizes the reasons of State, the man of mediocrity makes terms with force. In short, an assembly yields to an idea, like the Convention during the Terror; to a power, like the Corps Législatif under Napoleon; to a system or to money, as it does to-day. The republican parliament of which some good souls dream is an impossibility; those who wish it are ready-made dupes, or future tyrants. A deliberating assembly which discusses the dangers of a nation when it ought to force it to take action, is ridiculous; don't you think so? Let the people send representatives to impose or rescind taxes; that, indeed, is

just and has been allowed at all times, — by the worst tyrants as well as the most compliant of kings. Let this elective body, which changes like the needs and the ideas which it represents, oppose, on behalf of all, the concession of obedience to a bad law; that is well. But suppose five hundred men, gathered from all parts of the empire, were to make a good law; would it not be a poor joke which sooner or later the populations would have to pay for? They change tyrants, that is all. Authority and law ought therefore to be the work of one, who, by the force of things, is continually compelled to submit his actions to public approbation. But the modifications brought into the exercise of power — whether that of one man, or of many men, or of a multitude — can only be found in the religious institutions of a people. Religion is the only counterbalancing agent that is really efficacious against abuses of the supreme power. If the religious sentiment perishes among a people, the masses become seditious on principle, and the prince makes himself a tyrant by necessity. The Chambers which are interposed between the sovereign and his subjects are mere palliatives to these two tendencies. Parliamentary assemblies, as I have just said, become the accomplice of insurrection or of tyranny.

“Nevertheless,” continued Benassis, checking himself, “the government of one, towards which I lean, is not an unmixed good; for the result of politics will depend forever on manners and morals and beliefs. If a nation has grown old, if philosophy and the spirit of controversy have corrupted it to the marrow of its bones, that nation is marching on to despotism in spite of its forms of liberty; in like manner, the sounder nations

will find liberty in spite of the forms of despotism. From all this comes the necessity for great restrictions on electoral rights, the necessity for a strong authority, the necessity for a powerful religion which shall make the rich man the friend of the poor man, and teach the poor entire resignation. Also there is urgent need of confining parliaments to questions of taxation, and the enrolment of the laws, taking from them the direct duty of law-making. Many minds form other ideas on this subject, I know. To-day, as in former days, we find men searching ardently for the highest good, who desire to change the ordering of society to something wiser and better than at present. But innovations which tend towards complete social upsetting, must have a universal sanction. To such innovators I advise patience. When I consider the time which was required for the establishment of Christianity, a moral revolution which was meant to be purely pacific, I shudder to think of the horrors of a revolution for material interests, and I cling to the maintenance of existing institutions. To each his own thought, says Christianity; to each his own field, says modern law. Modern law has placed itself in harmony with Christianity. To each his own thought, is a consecration of the rights of intellect; to each his own field, is the consecration of the rights of property won by the toils of labor. Out of this comes society. Nature has founded human life on the sentiment of self-preservation; social life is founded on self-interest. Those seem to me the essential political principles. In subordinating these two egotistic sentiments to the thought of a future life, religion softens the hardship of social contacts. Thus, God tem-

pers the sufferings that come through the friction of interests by the sentiment of religion, which has made self-forgetfulness a virtue, just as he has lessened, through the action of unknown laws, the frictions in the mechanism of his worlds. Christianity bids the poor to bear with the rich, and commands the rich to comfort the miseries of the poor; to me, those words are the essence of all laws, human or divine."

"I, who am not a statesman," said the notary, "I call a sovereign the liquidator of a society that ought to be in a perpetual state of liquidation; he transmits to his successor a capital equal to the one he received —"

"I am not a statesman," said Benassis, quickly. "It only needs plain common-sense to improve the condition of a district, a village, or an *arrondissement*. Talent of course is necessary to govern a department, but those four spheres of administration have horizons which can be taken in at a glance by ordinary eyes; their interests, however, are fastened to the greater interests of the State by visible ties. In the higher regions all is on the larger scale; the eye of a statesman ought to see the whole field from the vantage-ground on which he is placed. To produce much good in a department, an *arrondissement*, a district, or a village, it is only necessary to foresee results for ten years ahead; but when the nation is in question, a statesman must forecast its destinies and measure its course throughout a century. The genius of a Colbert and a Sully is nothing unless it rests upon the will which made the Napoleons and the Cromwells. A great minister, *messieurs*, is a great thought, written upon all the years of the century whose splendor and prosperity are his work.

Stability is the quality he most needs. Indeed, in all things human, is not stability the highest expression of strength? We have seen too many men of late with ministerial ideas instead of national ideas, not to admire the true statesman as one who presents to us the greatest of human poems. To look beyond the present and forestall destiny; to be above power, and to hold it only from a conviction of usefulness; to lay aside his passions and all vulgar ambitions that he may remain master of his faculties, and foresee, decide, and act unceasingly; to make himself just and absolute; to maintain order on the grandest scale; to impose silence on his own heart, and listen only to his intellect; to be neither trustful nor distrustful, neither grateful nor ungrateful, never unprepared for an event, nor surprised by an idea; to live, in short, by the esteem of the masses, and hold the mastery by spreading over them the wings of his own spirit, seeing, not the details, but the consequences of everything, — is not that to be a little more than man? The names of those great and glorious fathers of the nations should be held forever in popular remembrance."

There was a moment's silence, during which the guests looked at each other.

"Messieurs, you have said nothing of the army," cried Genestas. "The military organization seems to me the true type for all good civil society; the sword is the guardian of a people."

"Captain," replied the justice of the peace, laughing, "an old lawyer once said that empires began by the sword and ended with an inkstand; we have got to the inkstand."

"Messieurs, now that we have settled the destinies of the world, let us talk of other things. Captain, take a glass of Hermitage," cried the doctor, gayly.

"Two, rather than one," said Genestas, holding out his glass; "I will drink them to your health, as to that of a man who does honor to our species."

"And whom we love," said the curate in a gentle voice.

"Monsieur Janvier, do you wish to make me commit the sin of pride?"

"Monsieur le curé said in a low voice what all the district says in a loud one," said Cambon.

"Messieurs, I propose that we escort Monsieur Janvier to the parsonage; it is bright moonlight."

"So be it," said the guests, and they prepared to accompany the curate.

"Now let us go to my barn," said the doctor, taking Genestas by the arm, after saying good-night to the curate and his other guests. "And there, Captain Bluteau, you will hear about Napoleon. We shall find a few old cronies who will set Goguelat, the postman, to declaiming about the people's god. Nicolle, my stable-man, was to put a ladder by which we can get into the hay-loft through a window, and find a place where we can see and hear all that goes on. A *veillée* is worth the trouble, believe me. Come; it is n't the first time I've hidden in the hay to hear the tale of a soldier or some peasant yarn. But we must hide; if these poor people see a stranger they are constrained at once, and are no longer their natural selves."

"Eh! my dear host," said Genestas, "have n't I

often pretended to sleep, that I might listen to my troopers round a bivouac? I never laughed more heartily in the Paris theatres than I did at an account of the retreat from Moscow, told in fun, by an old sergeant to a lot of recruits who were afraid of war. He declared the French army slept in sheets, and drank its wine well-iced; that the dead stood still in the roads; Russia was white; they curried the horses with their teeth; those who liked to skate had lots of fun, and those who fancied frozen puddings ate their fill; the women were usually cold, and the only thing that was really disagreeable was the want of hot water to shave with; in short, he recounted such absurdities that an old quartermaster, who had had his nose frozen off and was known by the name of Nez-restant, laughed himself."

"Hush," said Benassis, "here we are; I'll go first; follow me."

The pair mounted the ladder and crouched in the hay, without being seen or heard by the people below, and placed themselves at ease, so that they could see and hear all that went on. The women were sitting in groups round the three or four candles that stood on the tables. Some were sewing, some knitting; several sat idle, their necks stretched out and their heads and eyes turned to an old peasant who was telling a story. Most of the men were standing, or lying on bales of hay. These groups, all perfectly silent, were scarcely visible in the flickering glimmer of the tallow-candles encircled by glass bowls full of water, which concentrated the light in rays upon the women at work about the tables. The size of the barn, whose roof was dark and sombre, still further obscured the rays of light, which touched the

heads with unequal color, and brought out picturesque effects of light and shade. Here, the brown forehead and the clear eyes of an eager little peasant-girl shone forth; there, the rough brows of a few old men were sharply defined by a luminous band, which made fantastic shapes of their worn and discolored garments. These various listeners, so diverse in their attitudes, all expressed on their motionless features the absolute abandonment of their intelligence to the narrator. It was a curious picture, illustrating the enormous influence exercised over every class of mind by poetry. In exacting from a story-teller the marvellous that must still be simple, or the impossible that is almost believable, the peasant proves himself to be a true lover of the purest poetry.

"Though the house had an evil look," the peasant was saying as the new listeners settled themselves in the hay, "that poor hunchbacked woman was so tired after carrying her hemp to market that she went in; besides, night was coming on. She asked for nothing but a place to sleep in; as for food, she pulled a crust out of her wallet and ate it. So then, the woman of the house, who was the wife of the brigands, not knowing what they had agreed to do that night, welcomed the hunchback and put her in an upper room without a light. The poor thing threw herself on a miserable pallet, said her prayers, thought about her hemp, and began to go to sleep; but before she was fairly off, she heard a noise, and saw two men come in with a lantern; each of them held a knife. She was seized with fear, because, don't you see, the great lords liked patties made of human flesh, and in those days people made

them for them. But the old woman's skin was as hard as horn, and she comforted herself by thinking that they'd know she was bad eating. The two men passed the hunchback and went to a bed that stood in the great attic, and in which they had put the gentleman with the big valise, who was supposed to be a necromancer. The tallest of the two men raised the lantern, and took the gentleman by the feet; then the shortest—he that had pretended drunk—lay hold of his head, and cut it off in a twinkling, with one blow,—crack! Then they left the head and the body lying there all in the blood, and stole the valise, and went away. Now here's the old woman in a fine quandary what to do. First she thought of getting away without being seen, not knowing as yet that Providence had put her there for the glory of God and the punishment of the crime. She was afraid, and when people are afraid they don't trouble themselves about other things. But the woman of the house frightened the brigands by asking about the hunchback, and so they came softly back, up the little wooden staircase. The poor creature crouched in a heap with fear, and heard them disputing in a low voice: 'I tell you to kill her.' 'We mustn't kill her.' 'Kill her, I say.' 'No!' The old woman, who was n't a fool, shut up her eyes and pretended to sleep. She lay like an infant, with her hand on her heart, and breathing as easy as a cherub. The man that held the lantern opened the slide and flashed the light on the eyes of the old woman; but she never winked, for she was afraid of her life. 'Don't you see she sleeps like a dormouse?' says the tall one. 'Old women are so sly,' answers the short one; 'I shall kill her, and then

we'll be easy. We can salt her, and feed her to the pigs.' Though she heard every word of this, the old hunchback never stirred. 'Well, well, she really is asleep,' said the short bully, seeing that she didn't budge. That's how she saved her life. And you may well say she was courageous. There's not many young girls here that would breathe like the cherubim if they heard talk of pigs. The two brigands then began to carry away the dead man. They rolled him up in a sheet and flung him into the courtyard; and the old hunchback heard the pigs grunting 'hon, hon!' and hustling about to eat him.

"So then, the next day," resumed the narrator, after a pause, "the hunchback left the house, after paying two sous for her lodging. She took her wallet, behaved as if nothing had happened, asked the news of the neighborhood, went out quietly, and then, you may think she ran away. Not at all; fear clogged her legs, — but to her great good luck, as you shall see. She had n't gone half a mile when she saw one of the brigands following her, to spy if she really had seen nothing. She guessed what he was after, and sat down on a stone. 'What's the matter, my good woman?' said the short brigand, — for it was the short one, the worst of the two, that was after her. 'Ah, my good man,' she answered, 'my wallet is so heavy, and I'm so tired; I do want the arm of an honest man to get home on' (you see she was a sly one). So then the brigand offered to accompany her. She accepted. The man took her arm in his to see if she was afraid. Hey! the woman didn't tremble a bit, and walked along quite at her ease. So there they were, talking agriculture and

the best way to grow hemp, till they got to the entrance of the town where the hunchback lived, and then the brigand left her, for fear of meeting some one who would bring him to justice. The woman got home at noon, and thought over all the events of her journey, and of the night before, while waiting for her husband. The hemp-grower came home towards evening. He was hungry and wanted food. While she was greasing her pan to fry him something, she told how she had sold the hemp, and went on gossiping, woman-fashion; but she didn't say a word about the pigs, or the gentleman who was robbed and murdered and eaten. She fired her greasy pan, so as to clean it; but when she came to wipe it, it was full of blood. 'What did you put into it?' she says to her husband. 'Nothing,' he answers. She thought she must have got some woman's crotchet in her head, so she put the pan back on the fire. Behold! down came a head through the chimney. 'Just look at that!' said the old woman; 'if it is n't the very head of the dead man. Goodness! how he looks at me. What can he want?' '*That you avenge me!*' said a voice. 'What a fool you are!' said the hemp-grower; 'you're as blind as a mole, and you have n't got common-sense. With that he takes the head, which bit his fingers, and flung it into the yard. 'Make me an omelet,' he said, 'and don't you worry about that; it's a cat.' 'A cat!' she cried; 'why, it was as round as a ball.' She put her frying-pan on the fire and, lo and behold! down came a leg. Same thing over again. The man, who was n't any more surprised to see the leg than he had been to see the head, laid hold of it and threw it into the yard.

To cut a long story short, the other leg, two arms, the body, and the whole of the murdered traveller came down the chimney, one after the other. No omelet, of course. The old hemp-man got very hungry. 'By the powers above!' said he, 'if my omelet is n't made, I'll find a way of settling that man.' 'Then you do admit it is a man?' said the hunchback. 'Why did you stand me out just now that it was n't a head, you great plague, you?' The old woman broke the eggs and fried the omelet, and served it without any further grumbling, for the squabble made her rather uneasy. The husband sat down and began to eat. The hunchback, who was frightened, said she was n't hungry. Tap, tap! came a knock on the door. 'Come,' said the hemp-grower. In walked the dead traveller, who sat down on a stool, and said: 'Remember God, who gives eternal peace to those who believe in His name! Woman, thou didst see me put to death, and thou hast said nothing! I have been eaten by hogs! Hogs cannot enter paradise. Therefore I, who am a Christian, must go to hell, because a woman holds her tongue. Such a thing was never known before. Thou must deliver me,' — and much more such talk. The hunchback, who was getting more and more frightened, cleaned up her frying-pan, put on her Sunday clothes, and went and told the truth to the justice; so the crime was found out, and the robbers were very properly broken on the wheel in the market-place. After this the couple had what was much more agreeable to them, to wit, a male child, who became in course of time a king's baron. Now that's the true story of the Courageous Hunchbacked Woman."

"I don't like such stories," said the Fosseuse, "they make me dream. I prefer the adventures of Napoleon."

"That's right," said the game-keeper. "Come, Monsieur Goguelat, tell us about the Emperor."

"The evening is half over," said the postman, "and I don't like to shorten the victories."

"Never mind; go on! You've told them so many times we know them all by heart; but it is always a pleasure to hear them again."

"Yes! tell us about the Emperor," cried many voices together.

"Since you wish it," replied Goguelat. "But you'll see it is n't worth much when I have to tell it on the double-quick, charge! I'd rather tell about a battle. Shall I tell about Champ-Aubert, where we used up all the cartridges and spitted the enemy on our bayonets?"

"No! no! the Emperor! the Emperor!"

The veteran rose from his bale of hay and cast upon the assemblage that black look laden with miseries, emergencies, and sufferings, which distinguishes the faces of old soldiers. He seized his jacket by the two front flaps, raised them as if about to pack the knapsack which formerly held his clothes, his shoes, and all his fortune; then he threw the weight of his body on his left leg, advanced the right, and yielded with a good grace to the demands of the company. After pushing his gray hair to one side to show his forehead, he raised his head towards heaven that he might, as it were, put himself on the level of the gigantic history he was about to relate.

"You see, my friends, Napoleon was born in Cor-

sica, a French island, warmed by the sun of Italy, where it is like a furnace, and where the people kill each other, from father to son, all about nothing: that's a way they have. To begin with the marvel of the thing, — his mother, who was the handsomest woman of her time, and a knowing one, bethought herself of dedicating him to God, so that he might escape the dangers of his childhood and future life; for she had dreamed that the world was set on fire the day he was born. And indeed it was a prophecy! So she asked God to protect him, on condition that Napoleon should restore His holy religion, which was then cast to the ground. Well, that was agreed upon, and we shall see what came of it.

“Follow me closely, and tell me if what you hear is in the nature of man.

“Sure and certain it is that none but a man who conceived the idea of making a compact with God could have passed unhurt through the enemy's lines, through cannon-balls, and discharges of grape-shot that swept the rest of us off like flies, and always respected his head. I had proof of that — I myself — at Eylau. I see him now, as he rode up a height, took his field-glass, looked at the battle, and said, ‘All goes well.’ One of those plumed busy-bodies, who plagued him considerably and followed him everywhere, even to his meals, so they said, thought to play the wag, and took the Emperor's place as he rode away. Ho! in a twinkling, head and plume were off! You must understand that Napoleon had promised to keep the secret of his compact all to himself. That's why all those who followed him, even his nearest friends, fell like nuts, — Duroc, Bessières, Lannes, — all strong as steel bars,

though *he* could bend them as he pleased. Besides, — to prove he was the child of God, and made to be the father of soldiers, — was he ever known to be lieutenant or captain? no, no; commander-in-chief from the start. He did n't look to be more than twenty-four years of age when he was an old general at the taking of Toulon, where he first began to show the others that they knew nothing about manœuvring cannon.

“After that, down came our slip of a general to command the grand army of Italy, which had n't bread, nor munitions, nor shoes, nor coats, — a poor army, as naked as a worm. ‘My friends,’ said he, ‘here we are together. Get it into your pates that fifteen days from now you will be conquerors, — new clothes, good gaiters, famous shoes, and every man with a great-coat; but, my children, to get these things you must march to Milan where they are.’ And we marched. France, crushed as flat as a bed-bug, straightened up. We were thirty thousand bare-feet against eighty thousand Austrian bullies, all fine men, well set-up. I see ‘em now! But Napoleon — he was then only Bonaparte — he knew how to put the courage into us! We marched by night, and we marched by day; we slapped their faces at Montenotte, we thrashed them at Rivoli, Lodi, Arcole, Millesimo, and we never let ‘em up. A soldier gets the taste of conquest. So Napoleon whirled round those Austrian generals, who did n't know where to poke themselves to get out of his way, and he pelted ‘em well, — nipped off ten thousand men at a blow sometimes, by getting round them with fifteen hundred Frenchmen, and then he gleaned as he pleased. He took their cannon, their supplies, their money, their

munitions, in short, all they had that was good to take. He fought them and beat them on the mountains, he drove them into the rivers and seas, he bit 'em in the air, he devoured 'em on the ground, and he lashed 'em everywhere. Hey! the grand army feathered itself well; for, d'ye see, the Emperor, who was also a wit, called up the inhabitants and told them he was there to deliver them. So after that the natives lodged and cherished us; the women too, and very judicious they were. Now here's the end of it. In Ventose, '96, — in those times that was the month of March of to-day, — we lay cuddled in a corner of Savoy with the marmots; and yet, before that campaign was over, we were masters of Italy, just as Napoleon had predicted; and by the following March — in a single year and two campaigns — he had brought us within sight of Vienna. 'T was a clean sweep. We devoured their armies, one after the other, and made an end of four Austrian generals. One old fellow, with white hair, was roasted like a rat in the straw at Mantua. Kings begged for mercy on their knees! Peace was won.

“Could a *man* have done that? No; God helped him, to a certainty!

“He divided himself up like the loaves in the Gospel, commanded the battle by day, planned it by night; going and coming, for the sentinels saw him, — never eating, never sleeping. So, seeing these prodigies, the soldiers adopted him for their father. Forward, march! Then those others, the rulers in Paris, seeing this, said to themselves: ‘Here's a bold one that seems to get his orders from the skies; he's likely to put his paw on France. We must let him loose on Asia; we will send

him to America, perhaps that will satisfy him.' But 't was *written above* for him, as it was for Jesus Christ. The command went forth that he should go to Egypt. See, again, his resemblance to the Son of God. But that's not all. He called together his best veterans, his fire-eaters, the ones he had particularly put the devil into, and he said to them like this: 'My friends, they have given us Egypt to chew up, just to keep us busy, but we'll swallow it whole in a couple of campaigns, as we did Italy. The common soldiers shall be princes and have the land for their own. Forward, march!' 'Forward, march!' cried the sergeants, and there we were at Toulon, road to Egypt. At that time the English had all their ships in the sea; but when we embarked, Napoleon said, 'They won't see us. It is just as well that you should know from this time forth that your general has got his star in the sky, which guides and protects us.' What was said was done. Passing over the sea, we took Malta like an orange, just to quench his thirst for victory; for he was a man who could n't live and do nothing.

"So here we are in Egypt. Good. Once here, other orders. The Egyptians, d'ye see, are men who, ever since the earth was, have had giants for sovereigns, and armies as numerous as ants; for, you must understand, that's the land of genii and crocodiles, where they've built pyramids as big as our mountains, and buried their kings under them to keep them fresh, — an idea that pleased 'em mightily. So then, after we disembarked, the Little Corporal said to us, 'My children, the country you are going to conquer has a lot of gods that you must respect; because Frenchmen ought to be friends

with everybody, and fight the nations without vexing the inhabitants. Get it into your skulls that you are not to touch anything at first, for it is all going to be yours soon. Forward, march!' So far, so good. But all those people of Africa, to whom Napoleon was foretold under the name of Kébir-Bonaberdis, — a word of their lingo that means 'the sultan fires,' — were afraid as the devil of him. So the Grand-Turk, and Asia, and Africa, had recourse to magic. They sent us a demon, named the Mahdi, supposed to have descended from heaven on a white horse, which, like its master, was bullet-proof; and both of them lived on air, without food to support them. There are some that say they saw them; but I can't give you any reasons to make you certain about that. The rulers of Arabia and the Mamelukes tried to make their troopers believe that the Mahdi could keep them from perishing in battle; and they pretended he was an angel sent from heaven to fight Napoleon and get back Solomon's seal. Solomon's seal was part of their paraphernalia which they vowed our general had stolen. You must understand that we'd given 'em a good many wry faces, in spite of what he had said to us.

"Now, tell me how they knew that Napoleon had a pact with God? Was that natural, d'ye think?

"They held to it in their minds that Napoleon commanded the genii, and could pass hither and thither in the twinkling of an eye, like a bird. The fact is, he was everywhere. At last, it came to his carrying off a queen, beautiful as the dawn, for whom he had offered all his treasure, and diamonds as big as pigeon's eggs, — a bargain which the Mameluke to whom she particu-

larly belonged positively refused, although he had several others. Such matters, when they come to that pass, can't be settled without a great many battles; and, indeed, there was no scarcity of battles; there was fighting enough to please everybody. We were in line at Alexandria, at Gizeh, and before the Pyramids; we marched in the sun and through the sand, where some, who had the dazzles, saw water that they could n't drink, and shade where their flesh was roasted. But we made short work of the Mamelukes; and everybody else yielded at the voice of Napoleon, who took possession of Upper and Lower Egypt, Arabia, and even the capitals of kingdoms that were no more, where there were thousand of statues and all the plagues of Egypt, more particularly lizards, — a mammoth of a country where everybody could take his acres of land for as little as he pleased. Well, while Napoleon was busy with his affairs inland, — where he had it in his head to do fine things, — the English burned his fleet at Aboukir; for they were always looking about them to annoy us. But Napoleon, who had the respect of the East and of the West, whom the Pope called his son, and the cousin of Mohammed called 'his dear father,' resolved to punish England, and get hold of India in exchange for his fleet. He was just about to take us across the Red Sea into Asia, a country where there are diamonds and gold to pay the soldiers and palaces for bivouacs, when the Mahdi made a treaty with the Plague, and sent it down to hinder our victories. Halt! The army to a man defiled at that parade; and few they were who came back on their feet. Dying soldiers could n't take Saint-Jean d'Acre, though they

rushed at it three times with generous and martial obstinacy. The Plague was the strongest. No saying to that enemy, 'My good friend.' Every soldier lay ill. Napoleon alone was fresh as a rose, and the whole army saw him drinking in pestilence without its doing him a bit of harm.

"Ha! my friends! will you tell me that *that's* in the nature of a mere man?

"The Mamelukes, knowing we were all in the ambulances, thought they could stop the way; but that sort of joke would n't do with Napoleon. So he said to his demons, his veterans, those that had the toughest hide, 'Go, clear me the way.' Junot, a sabre of the first cut, and his particular friend, took a thousand men, no more, and ripped up the army of the pacha who had had the presumption to put himself in the way. After that, we came back to headquarters at Cairo. Now, here's another side of the story. Napoleon absent, France was letting herself be ruined by the rulers in Paris, who kept back the pay of the soldiers of the other armies, and their clothing, and their rations; left them to die of hunger, and expected them to lay down the law to the universe without taking any trouble to help them. Idiots! who amused themselves by chattering, instead of putting their own hands in the dough. Well, that's how it happened that our armies were beaten, and the frontiers of France were encroached upon: THE MAN was not there. Now observe, I say *man* because that's what they called him; but 't was nonsense, for he had a star and all its belongings; it was we who were only men. He taught history to France after his famous battle of Aboukir, where, with-

out losing more than three hundred men, and with a single division, he vanquished the grand army of the Turk, seventy-five thousand strong, and hustled more than half of it into the sea, r-r-rah!

“That was his last thunder-clap in Egypt. He said to himself, seeing the way things were going in Paris, ‘I am the saviour of France. I know it, and I must go.’ But, understand me, the army didn’t know he was going, or they’d have kept him by force and made him Emperor of the East. So now we were sad; for He was gone who was all our joy. He left the command to Kléber, a big mastiff, who came off duty at Cairo, assassinated by an Egyptian, whom they put to death by empaling him on a bayonet; that’s the way they guillotine people down there. But it makes ’em suffer so much that a soldier had pity on the criminal and gave him his canteen; and then, as soon as the Egyptian had drunk his fill, he gave up the ghost with all the pleasure in life. But that’s a trifle we could n’t laugh at then. Napoleon embarked in a cockleshell, a little skiff that was nothing at all, though ’t was called ‘Fortune;’ and in a twinkling, under the nose of England, who was blockading him with ships of the line, frigates, and anything that could hoist a sail, he crossed over, and there he was in France. For he always had the power, mind you, of crossing the seas at one straddle.

“Was that a human man? Bah!

“So, one minute he is at Fréjus, the next in Paris. There, they all adore him; but he summons the government. ‘What have you done with my children, the soldiers?’ he says to the lawyers. ‘You’re a mob of

rascally scribblers; you are making France a mess of pottage, and snapping your fingers at what people think of you. It won't do; and I speak the opinion of everybody.' So, on that, they wanted to battle with him and kill him — click! he had 'em locked up in barracks, or flying out of windows, or drafted among his followers, where they were as mute as fishes, and as pliable as a quid of tobacco. After that stroke — consul! And then, as it was not for him to doubt the Supreme Being, he fulfilled his promise to the good God, who, you see, had kept His word to him. He gave Him back his churches, and re-established His religion; the bells rang for God and for him: and lo! everybody was pleased; *primo*, the priests, whom he saved from being harassed; *secundo*, the bourgeois, who thought only of their trade, and no longer had to fear the *rapiamus* of the law, which had got to be unjust; *tertio*, the nobles, for he forbade they should be killed, as, unfortunately, the people had got the habit of doing.

“But he still had the Enemy to wipe out; and he wasn't the man to go to sleep at a mess-table, because, d'ye see, his eye looked over the whole earth as if it were no bigger than a man's head. So then he appeared in Italy, like as though he had stuck his head through the window. One glance was enough. The Austrians were swallowed up at Marengo like so many gudgeons by a whale! Ouf! The French eagles sang their pæans so loud that all the world heard them — and it sufficed! ‘We won't play that game any more,’ said the German. ‘Enough, enough!’ said all the rest. To sum up: Europe backed down, England knocked under. General peace; and the kings and

the peoples made believe kiss each other. That's the time when the Emperor invented the Legion of honor — and a fine thing, too. 'In France' — this is what he said at Boulogne before the whole army — 'every man is brave. So the citizen who does a fine action shall be sister to the soldier, and the soldier shall be his brother, and the two shall be one under the flag of honor.'

"We, who were down in Egypt, now came home. All was changed! He left us general, and hey! in a twinkling we found him EMPEROR. France gave herself to him, like a fine girl to a lancer. When it was done — to the satisfaction of all, as you may say — a sacred ceremony took place, the like of which was never seen under the canopy of the skies. The Pope and the cardinals, in their red and gold vestments, crossed the Alps expressly to crown him before the army and the people, who clapped their hands. There is one thing that I should do very wrong not to tell you. In Egypt, in the desert close to Syria, the RED MAN came to him on the Mount of Moses, and said, 'All is well.' Then, at Marengo, the night before the victory, the same Red Man appeared before him for the second time, standing erect and saying: 'Thou shalt see the world at thy feet; thou shalt be Emperor of France, King of Italy, master of Holland, sovereign of Spain, Portugal, and the Illyrian provinces, protector of Germany, saviour of Poland, first eagle of the Legion of honor — all.' This Red Man, you understand, was his genius, his spirit, — a sort of satellite who served him, as some say, to communicate with his star. I never really believed that. But the Red Man himself

is a true fact. Napoleon spoke of him, and said he came to him in troubled moments, and lived in the palace of the Tuileries under the roof. So, on the day of the coronation, Napoleon saw him for the third time ; and they were in consultation over many things.

“ After that, Napoleon went to Milan to be crowned king of Italy, and there the grand triumph of the soldier began. Every man who could write was made an officer. Down came pensions ; it rained duchies ; treasures poured in for the staff which didn't cost France a penny ; and the Legion of honor provided incomes for the private soldiers, — of which I receive mine to this day. So here were the armies maintained as never before on this earth. But besides that, the Emperor, knowing that he was to be the emperor of the whole world, bethought him of the bourgeois, and to please them he built fairy monuments, after their own ideas, in places where you'd never think to find any. For instance, suppose you were coming back from Spain and going to Berlin — well, you'd find triumphal arches along the way, with common soldiers sculptured on the stone, every bit the same as generals. In two or three years, and without imposing taxes on any of you, Napoleon filled his vaults with gold, built palaces, made bridges, roads, scholars, fêtes, laws, vessels, harbors, and spent millions upon millions, — such enormous sums that he could, so they tell me, have paved France from end to end with five-franc pieces, if he had had a mind to.

“ Now, when he sat at ease on his throne, and was master of all, so that Europe waited his permission to do his bidding, he remembered his four brothers and his three sisters, and he said to us, as it might be in

conversation, in an order of the day, 'My children, is it right that the blood relations of your Emperor should be begging their bread? No. I wish to see them in splendor like myself. It becomes, therefore, absolutely necessary to conquer a kingdom for each of them, — to the end that Frenchmen may be masters over all lands, that the soldiers of the Guard shall make the whole earth tremble, that France may spit where she likes, and that all the nations shall say to her, as it is written on my copper coins, "*God protects you!*"' 'Agreed!' cried the army. 'We'll go fish for thy kingdoms with our bayonets.' Ha! there was no backing down, don't you see! If he had taken it into his head to conquer the moon, we should have made ready, packed knapsacks, and clambered up; happily, he didn't think of it. The kings of the countries, who liked their comfortable thrones, were, naturally, loathe to budge, and had to have their ears pulled; so then — Forward, march! We did march; we got there; and the earth once more trembled to its centre. Hey! the men and the shoes he used up in those days! The enemy dealt us such blows that none but the grand army could have borne the fatigue of it. But you are not ignorant that a Frenchman is born a philosopher, and knows that a little sooner, or a little later, he has got to die. So we were ready to die without a word, for we liked to see the Emperor doing *that* on the geographies."

Here the narrator nimbly described a circle with his foot on the floor of the barn.

"And Napoleon said, 'There, that's to be a kingdom.' And a kingdom it was. Ha! the good times! The colonels were generals; the generals, marshals;

and the marshals, kings. There's one of 'em still on his throne, to prove it to Europe; but he's a Gascon and a traitor to France for keeping that crown; and he doesn't blush for shame as he ought to do, because crowns, don't you see, are made of gold. I who am speaking to you, I have seen, in Paris, eleven kings and a mob of princes surrounding Napoleon like the rays of the sun. You understand, of course, that every soldier had the chance to mount a throne, provided always he had the merit; so a corporal of the Guard was a sight to be looked at as he walked along, for each man had his share in the victory, and 't was plainly set forth in the bulletin. What victories they were! Austerlitz, where the army manœuvred as if on parade; Eylau, where we drowned the Russians in a lake, as though Napoleon had blown them into it with the breath of his mouth; Wagram, where the army fought for three days without grumbling. We won as many battles as there are saints in the calendar. It was proved then beyond a doubt, that Napoleon had the sword of God in his scabbard. The soldiers were his friends; he made them his children; he looked after us, he saw that we had shoes, and shirts, and great-coats, and bread, and cartridges; but he always kept up his majesty; for, don't you see, 't was his business to reign. No matter for that, however; a sergeant, and even a common soldier, could say to him, 'my Emperor,' just as you say to me sometimes, 'my good friend.' He gave us an answer if we appealed to him; he slept in the snow like the rest of us; and, indeed, he had almost the air of a human man. I who speak to you, I have seen him with his feet among the grapeshot, and no more uneasy

than you are now, — standing steady, looking through his field-glass, and minding his business. 'T was that kept the rest of us quiet. I don't know how he did it, but when he spoke, he made our hearts burn within us; and to show him we were his children, incapable of balking, did n't we rush at the mouths of the rascally cannon, that belched and vomited shot and shell without so much as saying, 'Look out!' Why! the dying must needs raise their heads to salute him and cry, 'LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR!'

"I ask you, was that natural? would they have done that for a human man?"

"Well, after he had settled the world, the Empress Josephine, his wife, a good woman all the same, managed matters so that she did not bear him any children, and he was obliged to give her up, though he loved her considerably. But, you see, he had to have little ones for reasons of state. Hearing of this, all the sovereigns of Europe quarrelled as to which of them should give him a wife. And he married, so they told us, an Austrian archduchess, daughter of Cæsar, an ancient man about whom people talk a good deal, and not in France only, — where any one will tell you what he did, — but in Europe. It is all true, for I myself who address you at this moment, I have been on the Danube, and have seen the remains of a bridge built by that man, who, it seems, was a relation of Napoleon in Rome, and that's how the Emperor got the inheritance of that city for his son. So after the marriage, which was a fête for the whole world, and in honor of which he released the people of ten years' taxes, — which they had to pay all the same, however, because the assessors

did n't take account of what he said,—his wife had a little one, who was King of Rome. Now, there's a thing that had never been seen on this earth; never before was a child born a king with his father living. On that day a balloon went up in Paris to tell the news to Rome, and that balloon made the journey in one day!

"Now, is there any man among you who will stand up here and declare to me that all that was human? No; it was *written above*; and may the scurvy seize 'em who deny that he was sent by God himself for the triumph of France!

"Well, here's the Emperor of Russia, that used to be his friend, he gets angry because Napoleon did n't marry a Russian; so he joins with the English, our enemies, — to whom our Emperor always wanted to say a couple of words in their burrows, only he was prevented. Napoleon gets angry too; an end had to be put to such doings; so he says to us: 'Soldiers! you have been masters of every capital in Europe, except Moscow, which is now the ally of England. To conquer England, and India which belongs to the English, it becomes our peremptory duty to go to Moscow.' Then he assembled the greatest army that ever trailed its gaiters over the globe; and so marvellously in hand it was that he reviewed a million of men in one day. 'Hourra!' ¹ cried the Russians. Down came all Russia and those animals of Cossacks in a flock. 'T was nation against nation, a general hurly-burly, and beware who could; 'Asia against Europe,' as the Red Man had

¹ Battle-cry of the Cossacks.

foretold to Napoleon. 'Enough,' cried the Emperor, 'I'll be ready.'

"So now, sure enough, came all the kings, as the Red Man had said, to lick Napoleon's hand! Austria, Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony, Poland, Italy, every one of them were with us, flattering us; ah, it was fine! The eagles never cawed so loud as at those parades, perched high above the banners of all Europe. The Poles were bursting with joy, because Napoleon was going to release them; and that's why France and Poland are brothers to this day. 'Russia is ours,' cried the army. We plunged into it well-supplied; we marched and we marched, — no Russians. At last we found the brutes entrenched on the banks of the Moskova. That's where I won my cross, and I've got the right to say it was a damnable battle. This was how it came about. The Emperor was anxious. He had seen the Red Man, who said to him, 'My son, you are going too fast for your feet; you will lack men; friends will betray you.' So the Emperor offered peace. But before signing, "Let us drub those Russians!" he said to us. 'Done!' cried the army. 'Forward, march!' said the sergeants. My clothes were in rags, my shoes worn out, from trudging along those roads, which are very uncomfortable ones; but no matter! I said to myself, 'As it's the last of our earthquakings, I'll go into it, tooth and nail!' We were drawn up in line before the great ravine, — front seats, as 't were. Signal given; and seven hundred pieces of artillery began a conversation that would bring the blood from your ears. Then — must do justice to one's enemies — the Russians let themselves be killed like Frenchmen; they wouldn't give way; we

could n't advance. 'Forward!' some one cried, 'here comes the Emperor!' True enough; he passed at a gallop, waving his hand to let us know we must take the redoubt. He inspired us; on we ran, I was the first in the ravine. Ha! my God! how the lieutenants fell, and the colonels, and the soldiers! No matter! all the more shoes for those that had none, and epaulets for the clever ones who knew how to read. 'Victory!' cried the whole line; 'Victory!' — and, would you believe it? a thing never seen before, there lay twenty-five thousand Frenchmen on the ground. 'T was like mowing down a wheat-field; only in place of the ears of wheat put the heads of men! We were sobered by this time, — those who were left alive. The MAN rode up; we made the circle round him. Ha! he knew how to cajole his children; he could be amiable when he liked, and feed 'em with words when their stomachs were ravenous with the hunger of wolves. Flatterer! he distributed the crosses himself, he uncovered to the dead, and then he cried to us, 'On! to Moscow!' 'To Moscow!' answered the army.

"We took Moscow. Would you believe it? the Russians burned their own city! 'T was a haystack six miles square, and it blazed for two days. The buildings crashed like slates, and showers of melted iron and lead rained down upon us, which was naturally horrible. I may say to you plainly, it was like a flash of lightning on our disasters. The Emperor said, 'We have done enough; my soldiers shall rest here.' So we rested awhile, just to get the breath into our bodies and the flesh on our bones, for we were really tired. We took possession of the golden cross that

was on the Kremlin; and every soldier brought away with him a small fortune. But out there the winter sets in a month earlier, — a thing those fools of science did n't properly explain. So, coming back, the cold nipped us. No longer an army — do you hear me? — no longer any generals, no longer any sergeants even.

{ 'T was the reign of wretchedness and hunger, — a reign of equality at last. No one thought of anything but to see France once more; no one stooped to pick up his gun or his money if he dropped them; each man followed his nose, and went as he pleased without caring for glory. The weather was so bad the Emperor could n't see his star; there was something between him and the skies. Poor man! it made him ill to see his eagles flying away from victory. Ah! 't was a mortal blow, you may believe me.

“Well, we got to the Beresina. My friends, I can affirm to you by all that is most sacred, by my honor, that since mankind came into the world, never, never, was there seen such a fricassee of an army — guns, carriages, artillery-wagons — in the midst of such snows, under such relentless skies! The muzzles of the muskets burned our hands if we touched them, the iron was so cold. It was there that the army was saved by the pontoniers, who were firm at their post; and there that Gondrin, — sole survivor of the men who were bold enough to go into the water and build the bridges by which the army crossed, — that Gondrin, here present, admirably conducted himself, and saved us from the Russians, who, I must tell you, still respected the grand army, remembering its victories. And,” he added, pointing to Gondrin, who was gazing

at him with the peculiar attention of a deaf man, "Gondrin is a finished soldier, a soldier who is honor itself, and he merits your highest esteem.

"I saw the Emperor," he resumed, "standing by the bridge, motionless, not feeling the cold — was that human? He looked at the destruction of his treasure, his friends, his old Egyptians. Bah! all that passed him, women, army-wagons, artillery, all were shattered, destroyed, ruined. The bravest carried the eagles; for the eagles, d'ye see, were France, the nation, all of you! they were the civil and the military honor that must be kept pure; could their heads be lowered because of the cold? It was only near the Emperor that we warmed ourselves, because when he was in danger we ran, frozen as we were — we, who wouldn't have stretched a hand to save a friend. They told us he wept at night over his poor family of soldiers. Ah! none but he and Frenchmen could have got themselves out of that business. We did get out, but with losses, great losses, as I tell you. The Allies captured our provisions. Men began to betray him, as the Red Man predicted. Those chatterers in Paris, who had held their tongues after the Imperial Guard was formed, now thought he was dead; so they hoodwinked the prefect of police, and hatched a conspiracy to overthrow the empire. He heard of it; it worried him. He left us, saying: 'Adieu, my children; guard the outposts; I shall return to you.' Bah! without him nothing went right; the generals lost their heads. the marshals talked nonsense and committed follies; but that was not surprising, for Napoleon, who was kind, had fed 'em on gold; they had got as fat as lard, and

would n't stir; some stayed in camp when they ought to have been warming the backs of the enemy who was between us and France.

"But the Emperor came back, and he brought recruits, famous recruits; he changed their backbone and made 'em dogs of war, fit to set their teeth into anything; and he brought a guard of honor, a fine body indeed!—all bourgeois, who melted away like butter on a gridiron.

"Well, spite of our stern bearing, here's everything going against us; and yet the army did prodigies of valor. Then came battles on the mountains, nations against nations,—Dresden, Lutzen, Bautzen. Remember these days, all of you, for 't was then that Frenchmen were so particularly heroic that a good grenadier only lasted six months. We triumphed always; yet there were those English, in our rear, rousing revolts against us with their lies! No matter, we cut our way home through the whole pack of the nations. Wherever the Emperor showed himself we followed him; for if, by sea or land, he gave us the word 'Go!' we went. At last, we were in France; and many a poor foot-soldier felt the air of his own country restore his soul to satisfaction, spite of the wintry weather. I can say for myself that it refreshed my life. Well, next, our business was to defend France, our country, our beautiful France, against all Europe, which resented our having laid down the law to the Russians, and pushed them back into their dens, so that they couldn't eat us up alive, as northern nations, who are dainty and like southern flesh, have a habit of doing,—at least, so I've heard some generals say. Then the Emperor saw

his own father-in-law, his friends whom he had made kings, and the scoundrels to whom he had given back their thrones, all against him. Even Frenchmen, and allies in our own ranks, turned against us under secret orders, as at the battle of Leipsic. Would common soldiers have been capable of such wickedness? Three times a day men were false to their word, — and they called themselves princes!

“ So, then, France was invaded. Wherever the Emperor showed his lion face, the enemy retreated; and he did more prodigies in defending France than ever he had done in conquering Italy, the East, Spain, Europe, and Russia. He meant to bury every invader under the sod, and teach 'em to respect the soil of France. So he let them get to Paris, that he might swallow them at a mouthful, and rise to the height of his genius in a battle greater than all the rest, — a mother-battle, as 't were. But there, there! the Parisians were afraid for their twopenny skins, and their trumpery shops; they opened the gates. Then the Ragusades began, and happiness ended. The Empress was fooled, and the white banner flaunted from the windows. The generals whom he had made his nearest friends abandoned him for the Bourbons, — a set of people no one had heard tell of. The Emperor bade us farewell at Fontainebleau: ‘Soldiers!’ — I can hear him now; we wept like children; the flags and the eagles were lowered as if for a funeral: it was, I may well say it to you, it was the funeral of the Empire; her dapper armies were nothing now but skeletons. So he said to us, standing there on the portico of his palace: ‘My soldiers! we are vanquished by treachery; but we shall meet in

heaven, the country of the brave. Defend my child, whom I commit to you. Long live Napoleon II. !' He meant to die, that no man should look upon Napoleon vanquished; he took poison, enough to have killed a regiment, because, like Jesus Christ before his Passion, he thought himself abandoned of God and his talisman. But the poison did not hurt him.

"See again! he found he was immortal.

"Sure of himself, knowing he must ever be THE EMPEROR, he went for a while to an island to study out the nature of these others, who, you may be sure, committed follies without end. Whilst he bided his time down there, the Chinese, and the wild men on the coast of Africa, and the Barbary States, and others who are not at all accommodating, knew so well he was more than man that they respected his tent, saying to touch it would be to offend God. Thus, d'ye see, when these others turned him from the doors of his own France, he still reigned over the whole world. Before long he embarked in the same little cockleshell of a boat he had had in Egypt, sailed round the beard of the English, set foot in France, and France acclaimed him. The sacred cuckoo flew from spire to spire; all France cried out with one voice, 'LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR!' In this region, here, the enthusiasm for that wonder of the ages was, I may say, solid. Dauphiné behaved well; and I am particularly pleased to know that her people wept when they saw, once more, the gray top-coat. March first it was, when Napoleon landed with two hundred men to conquer that kingdom of France and of Navarre, which, on the twentieth of the same month was again the French Empire. On that day our MAN

was in Paris; he had made a clean sweep, recovered his dear France, and gathered his veterans together by saying no more than three words, 'I am here.'

"'T was the greatest miracle God had yet done! Before *him*, did ever man recover an empire by showing his hat? And these others, who thought they had subdued France! Not they! At sight of the eagles, a national army sprang up, and we marched to Waterloo. There, the Guard died at one blow. Napoleon, in despair, threw himself three times before the cannon of the enemy without obtaining death. We saw that. The battle was lost. That night the Emperor called his old soldiers to him; on the field soaked with our blood he burned his banners and his eagles, — his poor eagles, ever victorious, who cried 'Forward' in the battles, and had flown the length and breadth of Europe, *they* were saved the infamy of belonging to the enemy: all the treasures of England could n't get her a tail-feather of them. No more eagles! — the rest is well-known. The Red Man went over to the Bourbons, like the scoundrel that he is. France is crushed; the soldier is nothing; they deprive him of his dues; they discharge him to make room for broken-down nobles — ah, 't is pitiable! They seized Napoleon by treachery; the English nailed him on a desert island in mid-ocean on a rock raised ten thousand feet above the earth; and there he is, and will be, till the Red Man gives him back his power for the happiness of France. These others say he's dead. Ha, dead! 'Tis easy to see they don't know Him. They tell that fib to catch the people, and feel safe in their hovel of a government. Listen! the truth at the bottom of it all is that his friends

have left him alone on the desert isle to fulfil a prophecy, for I forgot to say that his name, Napoleon, means 'lion of the desert.' Now this that I tell you is true as the Gospel. All other tales that you hear about the Emperor are follies without common-sense; because, d'ye see, God never gave to child of woman born the right to stamp his name in red as *he* did, on the earth, which forever shall remember him! Long live Napoleon, the father of his people and of the soldier!"

"Long live General Éblé!" cried the pontonier.

"How happened it you were not killed in the ravine at Moskova?" asked a peasant woman.

"How do I know? We went in a regiment, we came out a hundred foot-soldiers; none but the line were capable of taking that redoubt: the infantry, d'ye see, that's the real army."

"And the cavalry! what of that?" cried Genestas, letting himself roll from the top of the hay, and appearing with a suddenness which made the bravest utter a cry of terror. "Eh! my old veteran, you forget the red lancers of Poniatowski, the cuirassiers, the dragoons! they that shook the earth when Napoleon, impatient that the victory was delayed, said to Murat, 'Sire, cut them in two.' Ha, we were off! first at a trot, then at a gallop, 'one, two,' and the enemy's line was cut in halves like an apple with a knife. A charge of cavalry, my old hero! why, 't is a column of cannonballs!"

"How about the pontoniers?" cried Gondrin.

"My children," said Genestas, becoming suddenly quite ashamed of his sortie when he saw himself in the midst of a silent and bewildered group, "there are no

spies here, — see, take this and drink to the Little Corporal.”

“LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR!” cried all the people present, with one voice.

“Hush, my children!” said the officer, struggling to control his emotion. “Hush! *he is dead*. He died saying: ‘Glory, France, and battle.’ My friends, he had to die, he! but his memory — never!”

Goguelat made a gesture of disbelief; then he said in a low voice to those nearest to him, “The officer is still in the service, and he’s told to tell the people the Emperor is dead. We mustn’t be angry with him, because, d’ye see, a soldier has to obey orders.”

As Genestas left the barn he heard the Fosseuse say, “That officer is a friend of the Emperor and of Monsieur Benassis.” On that, all the people rushed to the door to get another sight of him, and by the light of the moon they saw the doctor take his arm.

“I committed a great folly,” said Genestas, “let us get home quickly. Those eagles — the cannon — the campaigns! I no longer knew where I was.”

“What do you think of my Goguelat?” asked Benassis.

“Monsieur, so long as such tales are told, France will carry in her entrails the fourteen armies of the Republic, and may at any time renew the conversation of cannon with all Europe. That’s my opinion.”

Shortly after, they reached the house and sat down thoughtfully for awhile on either side the fireplace in the *salon*, where the dying embers still sent up a few sparks. Notwithstanding the proofs of confidence which he had received from the doctor, Genestas

hesitated to put a searching question which might seem indiscreet. Yet, after giving him a few scrutinizing glances, and meeting a look full of courteous amenity, a look only seen on the lips of a really strong man, he was encouraged to say : —

‘ Monsieur, your life differs so essentially from that of other men that you will not be surprised if I ask you the cause of your retirement. Though my curiosity may seem to you intrusive, you will at least admit that it is very natural. Let me tell you something. I have had comrades with whom I never grew intimate, not even when we had made many campaigns together; but I have had others to whom I would say, ‘ Get my money with yours from the paymaster,’ three days after first seeing them and getting drunk together, as will sometimes happen to the best of men in a merry mood. Well, you are one of those to whom I make myself a friend without asking permission, — indeed, without fully knowing why.”

“ Captain Bluteau — ”

For some time past, whenever the doctor gave him his false name, Genestas could not repress a slight grimace. Benassis caught the pained expression on his face, and looked fixedly at the officer to discover its cause; but, as it was impossible for him to guess the truth, he attributed the look to some physical suffering, and after a pause he went on : —

“ Captain, I will speak to you of myself. Several times to-day I have been led to do so, as I explained the improvements I have brought about in this valley; but it was in connection with the district and its inhabitants, in whose interests my own are necessarily mixed

up. But, to tell you my history will oblige me to speak of myself only, and my life has little in it that is interesting to others."

"Were it as simple as that of your Fosseuse," answered Genestas, "I still should wish to hear it, that I might know what chances and changes have thrown a man of your quality into this district."

"Captain, for twelve years I have kept silence. Now that I await, on the verge of my grave, the blow that is to cast me into it, I will have the good faith to tell you that this silence begins to weigh upon me. For twelve years I have suffered without the consolation that friendship gives to wounded hearts. My poor sick people, my peasants, show me many an example of resignation; but they have me to understand them, and they feel it; while I have none to gather my secret sighs, none to give me the hand-clasp of a true man, — that best of consolations, which so few lack, not even Gondrin."

With a sudden impulse, Genestas held out his hand to Benassis, who was deeply moved at the action.

"Perhaps the Fosseuse would have understood me, as the angels would," he resumed, in an altered voice; "but also she might have loved me, and that would have been a misfortune. Captain, none but an old soldier, indulgent like yourself, or a young man full of illusions, could listen to my confession and enter into it; it can be comprehended only by a man to whom all the ways of life are fully known, or by a youth who is a total stranger to them. For lack of a priest, the old crusaders died on the battle-field confessing to the cross of their sword-hilts; they made it the faithful

mediator between their souls and God. And so you, one of Napoleon's finest sabres, you, hard and strong as steel, you, perhaps, will comprehend me well. To enter fully into my story, it is quite necessary to possess certain delicacies of feeling, and to share in the natural beliefs of simple hearts; all of which seem ridiculous to those philosophers who apply to their private interests the maxims which belong to the government of States. I shall speak to you in good faith, as a man who seeks to justify neither the good nor the evil of his life; and who hides nothing from you, because he is here to-day, far removed from the world, indifferent to the judgment of men, and full of hope in God."

Benassis paused; then he rose and said: "Before beginning my tale I will order tea. For twelve years Jacquotte has never failed to come and ask if I wished for it; she would certainly interrupt us now. Will you take some, captain?"

"Thank you, no."

Benassis soon returned.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONFESSION OF THE COUNTRY DOCTOR.

“I WAS born,” resumed the doctor, “in a small town in Languedoc, where my father had lived for some time ; and there my childhood was passed. When eight years old, I was sent to a school at Sorrèze, which I did not leave until I went to finish my education in Paris. My father’s youth had been wild and prodigal, but his wasted patrimony was replaced by a fortunate marriage, and by the slow savings of a provincial life, where more pride is felt in the possession of money than in the spending of it, and where the natural ambitions of men die out or turn to avarice, in default of generous nutriment. Becoming rich, and having but one son, he wished to transmit to me the cold experience he had gained in exchange for his vanished illusions, — last and noble error of old men, who vainly strive to bequeath their virtues and their prudence to children who are enamoured of life and in haste to enjoy it. This desire on the part of my father led him to lay down a plan for my education of which, in the end, I became a victim. He carefully concealed from me the real value of his property, and condemned me, in my own interests, to suffer during my best years the privations and anxieties of a young man eager to acquire his independence ; he wished to instil into me the virtues of

poverty — patience, a thirst for knowledge, and the love of work. By thus forcing me to recognize the value of wealth, he hoped to teach me the lesson of preserving my inheritance; and therefore, as soon as I was old enough to listen to advice, he urged me to adopt and follow some profession. My tastes inclined me to the study of medicine. From Sorrèze, where for ten years I had been under the half-conventual discipline of the Oratorians in the solitude of a provincial lyceum, I was brought, without an intervening moment, to the capital.

“My father accompanied me, for the purpose of presenting me to one of his friends. The two old men took, without my knowledge, the most minute precautions against the effervescence of my youth, then so innocent. My allowance was closely calculated, and brought down to the actual necessities of life, and I could only draw my quarterly stipend by presenting the receipts for the payment of my terms at the School of Medicine. This mortifying distrust was concealed under a pretence of business methods. In other respects my father was liberal as to the expenses of my education and the ordinary pleasures of Parisian life. His old friend, who was glad to have a young man to guide through the labyrinth I was about to enter, was one of those men who class their feelings as carefully as they docket their papers. By consulting the note-book of a preceding year, he always knew what he had done in the month, day, and hour that corresponded to the current year. Life was to him an enterprise, of which he kept a commercial account. He was a man of much merit, but shrewd, over-precise, distrustful, and never without

specious reasons to explain the precautions he took against me. He bought my books; he paid for my lessons; when I wished to learn to ride, the worthy man inquired in person for the best school, took me there himself, and forestalled my wishes by putting a horse at my disposal for the holidays. But in spite of these devices of old age, which I learned to baffle as soon as I had an interest in escaping them, the excellent man was a second father to me. 'My friend,' he said, as soon as he perceived that I should break my tether unless he lengthened it, 'young men are often hurried into follies by the impetuosity of their age; you may some day find yourself in want of money; in that case, come to me. Your father formerly did me a great service, and I shall always have a trifle at your command; but never deceive me, and never be afraid to tell me your errors. I have been young, and we shall understand each other like comrades.'

"My father installed me in a second-class boarding-house in the Latin quarter, among respectable people, where I had a tolerably well-furnished room. This first stage of independence, the kindness of my father, the sacrifices he seemed to be making for me, gave me, nevertheless, but little pleasure. Perhaps we must taste the sweets of liberty before we can understand its full value. Now, the memory of my free childhood was nearly obliterated by the restraints of a conventual school-life, the burden of which my mind had not as yet thrown off; and the injunctions of my father had just put fresh tasks upon me. Moreover, Paris, to my eyes, was an enigma; it affords no amusement until we have learned to study its pleasures. Thus I found my posi-

tion little changed, unless it were that my new lyceum was on a larger scale, and called itself the School of Medicine. Nevertheless I studied vigorously, I attended the lectures with assiduity, I flung myself into work with all my strength, taking no relaxation; for the treasures of science which abound in Paris roused and delighted my imagination.

“Soon, however, a few imprudent intimacies, whose dangers were veiled by the thoughtless, confiding friendship which captivates all young men, carried me insensibly into the dissipations of Paris. I took a passionate delight in the theatre and in actors, and this began the work of my demoralization. The theatres of a city are baneful to young men, who never come out of them without emotions against which they struggle nearly always fruitlessly; so also with society, whose laws seem to me to be the accomplices of the debauchery there committed. Our legislation has, as it were, shut its eyes to the passions which torment a young man between the ages of twenty and twenty-five. In Paris everything assails him; his appetites are perpetually provoked. Religion preaches virtue to him, and the laws command him to practise it, but the things of life, and manners, and customs invite him to evil; the best of men and the most pious of women make light of continence. The great city of Paris seems to regard it as a duty to encourage vice; for the obstacles it puts in the way of all careers where a young man can honorably make his fortune are even more numerous than the snares it sets for his passions which dissipate it.

“For a long time I went night after night to some theatre, and contracted, little by little, idle habits. I

compromised with my sense of duty ; often I put off my most pressing occupations to the morrow ; soon, instead of endeavoring to acquire knowledge, I did only such tasks as were absolutely necessary to pass my examinations before taking my medical degree. At the lectures I no longer listened to the professors, who, as I called it, prosed. I flung down my old gods, and became a Parisian ; in short, I led the unbalanced life of a young provincial who, let loose in the great city, still retains a few true sentiments and still believes in certain moral precepts, though he allows himself to be corrupted by bad examples, from which, at the same time, he desires to escape. I made a poor fight ; I had accomplices within myself. Yes, monsieur, my face is not deceptive ; I have had all the passions whose imprint is now upon it. Nevertheless, I kept, deep in my heart, the sentiment of moral perfection, which, throughout my errors, never left me, and was destined to bring back to God, through remorse and weariness, the man whose youth had quenched its thirst in the pure waters of religion. He who keenly feels the passionate joys of earth will sooner or later be attracted by the flavor of the fruits of heaven.

“I went through the thousand delights, the countless despairs which more or less actively surround all youth at its outset. Sometimes I mistook my sense of vigor for the power of a firm will, and deluded myself as to the extent of my abilities ; sometimes at sight of the smallest obstacle in my way I fell into deeper discouragement than was natural to me. I conceived vast schemes, I dreamed of glory, I buckled to work ; and then some pleasure-party scattered my noble, half-

willed fancies. Yet the vague memory of these grand, miscarried conceptions left deceitful gleams behind them, which led me to believe in myself, without giving me the energy to bring anything to birth. This indolence, full of self-sufficiency, made me neither more nor less than a fool; for a fool is one who does nothing to justify the good opinion he forms of himself. I had activity without a purpose; I wanted the flowers of life without the labor that makes them bloom. Ignoring obstacles, I believed everything easy; the successes of science and the successes of fortune I attributed to luck. To my mind, genius was charlatanism; I imagined myself a man of science, because it was in my power to become one; and without reflecting on the patience that begets great work or the *doing* that reveals its difficulties, I drew at sight upon all its glories.

“My pleasures were rapidly exhausted. The theatre did not long amuse me; Paris was soon a void and a desert to a poor student whose only society was that of an old man who knew nothing of the actual world, and the wearisome persons to be met with in a boarding-house. Like all other young men who are disgusted with the life they lead, who have no fixed ideas, and no settled purpose in their minds, I wandered for days about the streets, along the quays, through the museums and the public gardens. An aimless life is harder to bear at that age than at any other, for it is full of wasted sap and of movement that leads to no result. I ignored the power that a firm will puts into the hands of a young man if he is able to conceive a purpose, and if he brings to bear on the execution of it all

his vital forces strengthened still further by the intrepid beliefs of youth. In childhood we are simply innocent, ignorant of the dangers of life; in youth we perceive its difficulties and its limitless extent. At the sight, a youth's courage sometimes fails; while still new to the business of social life he falls a prey to a sort of idiocy, a feeling of dull stupidity, as though he were helpless in a foreign land. At every age, the utterly unknown is a cause of involuntary terror. A young man is like a soldier who marches to the mouths of cannon, and runs away from a ghost. He hesitates among the world's maxims; he knows neither how to give nor how to take, how to defend himself nor how to attack; he loves women, and respects them as if he feared them. His qualities stand in his way; he is all generosity, all modesty, and free from the calculations of self-interest; if he lies, it is for his pleasure, not his advantage; in dubious paths, his conscience, with which he has not yet compromised, shows him the right way, though he delays to take it. Men born to live by the inspirations of the heart instead of listening to the dictates of the head, often remain a long time in this fluctuating position. It was mine. I became the plaything of two contending influences, — impelled on the one hand by the desires of a young man, restrained on the other by sentimental timidity.

“The emotions excited by Parisian life are cruel to souls endowed with keen sensibility; the advantages which superior men or rich men there enjoy irritate the passions of other men. In that world of grandeur and of littleness, envy is oftener a dagger than a spur. Amid the constant struggle of ambitions, desires, and

hatreds, it is impossible to escape being either the victim or the accomplice of the general movement; insensibly, the perpetual sight of vice made happy and virtue contemptible leads a young man to waver. Parisian life quickly destroys the texture of his conscience; and then begins, soon to be accomplished, the infernal work of his demoralization. The first of all pleasures, the one which in the beginning includes all others, is environed with such perils that it is impossible not to reflect on the smallest actions to which it incites, and not to calculate their every consequence. Such calculations lead to selfishness. If some poor student, swept onward by the impetuosity of his passions, is disposed to rise out of self, those whom he sees about him exhibit and inspire such distrust of higher things that it is very difficult for him not to share in that distrust, and not to put himself on guard against his own generous impulses. Such a struggle withers and shrinks the soul, drives the life to the brain, produces Parisian callousness, and results in that code of manners and morals where, under a bewitching frivolity and fictitious enthusiasms, lurk policy or lucre. In that world, the intoxication of happiness does not hinder the most artless of women from keeping her head clear. Such an atmosphere naturally influenced both my feelings and my behavior. The errors which poisoned my life might perhaps have weighed lightly on the consciences of other men, but Southern natures have a religious faith which compels them to believe in Catholic truth and in the certainty of another life. Such beliefs give depth to their passions, and persistency to their remorse.

“At the time when I was studying medicine, military men were the masters of society ; to please a woman it was necessary to be at least a colonel. What could a poor student be in such society? Nothing. Goaded by the vigor of my passions, finding no outlet for them, hampered at every step and in every wish by the want of money, regarding study and its honors as too slow a means to procure pleasures that tempted me, vacillating between the promptings of an inward shame and the force of evil examples, meeting with every facility for profligacy in low places, and every difficulty in attempting to enter good society, — I passed sad days, a prey to the surgings of passion, to the sloth that kills, to a despondency which broke at times into sudden elations. This crisis ended in a way that is common enough in the lives of young men.

“I have always had the deepest repugnance to injuring the peace of households ; partly, perhaps, because the natural frankness of my feelings prevents me from disguising them, and it would have been physically impossible to me to live in a position of flagrant falsehood. On the other hand, pleasures snatched in haste never tempted me ; I like better to taste my happiness. Not being actually vicious, I was helpless against my isolation ; I made many abortive attempts to enter society, where I might have met with some woman willing to devote herself to teaching me the perils of the way, who would have formed my manners, advised me without wounding my pride, and introduced me wherever I could have made friends who would have been useful to me in my future career. In my despair, some dangerous intrigue might perhaps have seduced me ; but all

that was beyond my reach, even the peril of it ; inexperience threw me back into solitude, where I remained face to face with my thwarted passions.

“ Finally, monsieur, I formed a connection, at first a secret one, with a young girl whom I persuaded, willingly or unwillingly, to share my life. She belonged to an honest family of small means ; it was not long before she left her simple life, fearlessly confiding to me a future which virtue had hitherto made hopeful to her. The narrowness of my means probably seemed to her the surest guarantee of my faithfulness. From that moment, the tempest which had raged in my heart, my extravagant desires, my ambitions, all subsided into happiness, — the happiness of a young man who as yet knows nothing of the ways of the world, of its maxims, its conventions, or the strength of its prejudices ; but a happiness as complete as that of a child. A first love is like a new childhood thrown across our days of pain and labor.

“ There are some men who learn to know life at a glance, who judge it for what it is, who see its errors and profit by them, understand its social maxims and turn them to their own advantage, and know how to estimate the bearings of everything. Such frigid men are wise in their generation, according to human laws. But there are others, poor poets, high-strung natures, who feel deeply and commit errors. I was one of them. My first attachment was not a real passion. I followed my instinct and not my heart. I sacrificed a poor girl to myself, and found no lack of reasons to assure me I was doing no wrong. As for her, she was devotion itself, — a heart of gold, a just spirit, a noble soul. She never

gave me any but the best advice. At first, her love revived my courage; she gently led me, by her belief in me, to take up my studies, predicting success and fame and fortune. In these days, medical science touches closely on all other sciences, and its distinctions, though difficult to win, are well rewarded. Fame is always a fortune in Paris. This tender young girl forgot herself in me, shared my life and bore with its caprices, and her economy brought luxury within my narrow means. I had more to spend upon my fancies when we were two together than I had ever had alone.

“Monsieur, it was the best part of all my life. I worked eagerly, for I had an object, I was encouraged; I brought home my thoughts, I related my actions to one who knew how to win my love, and, better still, to inspire respect for the discretion she displayed, in a situation where discretion might, perhaps, be thought impossible. But my days were all alike, monsieur. This monotony of happiness, the most delightful condition there is on earth, whose value is not felt till we have passed through all the tempests of the heart, — that sweet state into which no weariness of life can enter, where the most secret thoughts are shared, where we are comprehended — ah! to an ardent man, hungry for social distinctions, wearied of seeking fortune because she came with lagging feet, such happiness grew to be a clog. My old dreams assailed me; I vehemently desired the pleasures of wealth, and now I demanded them in the name of love. I expressed these wishes without reserve, at night, when a dear voice questioned me, and I sat, morose and melancholy, and absorbed in voluptuous dreams of imaginary opulence. I must have made that

gentle creature, — who had vowed herself to my happiness, — I must indeed have made her suffer. To her, the worst of griefs was to see me long for something that she could not give. Oh, monsieur! the devotion of women is sublime!”

The exclamation revealed some secret anguish, and the doctor fell into a passing revery, which Genestas refrained from interrupting.

“Well, monsieur,” resumed Benassis, “an event which ought to have completed the marriage thus begun, put an end to it, and was the first cause of my after sorrows. My father died, leaving a considerable fortune. Matters relating to my inheritance took me for some months into Languedoc, and I went alone. I recovered my liberty. Every obligation, even the sweetest, weighs upon youth; we must have experience of life before we can admit the necessity of a yoke and the virtue of labor. I felt, with the vivacity of a Languedocian, all the delight of coming and going without having to render an account, even a voluntary one, of my doings. If I did not wholly forget the ties that bound me, I was so occupied with pleasurable interests that the recollection of them grew insensibly weaker. I could not think without a pang of renewing them on my return; and then I asked myself why I should renew them at all. It is true I received letters full of deep tenderness; but at twenty-two years of age a young man fancies that all women are equally tender; he cannot yet distinguish between heart and passion; he confuses all in a general sense of pleasure, which seems, at first, to include all. It was only later, when I had come to a knowledge of men and things, that I learned

to appreciate what there was of true nobility in those letters, where nothing selfish ever mingled in the expression of feelings, where the rejoicings over my prosperity were for me alone, and where no hint that I could change was ever uttered, because the writer knew herself incapable of change. But already I was giving myself up to ambitious calculations; I thought of plunging into the pleasures of wealth, of becoming a personage, and making a prosperous marriage. I contented myself by saying, with the cold conceit of a fop, 'She is very fond of me.' Already I was anxious to find a means of freeing myself from the connection.

"Such embarrassments and their attendant shame lead to cruelty; to escape blushing before his victim, the man who has begun by wounding her soon kills her. The reflections I have since made on my conduct at that time have revealed to me many abysses in my own heart. Believe me, monsieur, those who sound the vices and virtues of human nature to their depths have studied them in good faith within themselves. Our own conscience is the point of departure. We reason from ourselves to man, never from man to us.

"When I returned to Paris, I went to live in a house I had hired, without informing the only person who had an interest in my actions of my return to Paris or my change of feeling. I was bent on playing a part among the young men of fashion. At the end of a few days, after tasting the first sweets of opulence, and when I felt sufficiently elated not to fall, as I thought, into weakness, I visited the poor creature I was intending to abandon. With the natural tact of women she guessed my secret feelings, and hid her tears. She

must have despised me ; but ever gentle and good, she showed no contempt. This forbearance harassed me greatly. Assassins of the home or the highway wish their victims to act in self-defence ; the struggle seems to justify the killing. At first, I continued my visits very affectionately. Though I was no longer tender, I made an effort to appear amiable ; after that I insensibly became polite, until one day, by a sort of tacit agreement, she allowed me to treat her like a stranger, and I considered that I was acting very suitably. Nevertheless, I flung myself with a sort of fury into the world, to stifle in amusements the little remorse that remained to me. He who despises himself cannot live alone ; I led the dissipated life which young men of fortune lead in Paris. Having a good education and a powerful memory, I seemed to have more mind than I really had, and I was thus led to think myself of more consequence than others. My superiority was so readily admitted on all sides that I took no pains to maintain it. Of all the influences of life, praise is the most skilfully treacherous. In Paris, policy in every walk of life knows how to smother talent at its birth under the wreaths flung in heaps upon its cradle. I did no honor to my reputation, I took no advantage of my standing to open a way to a career, I made no useful connections. On the contrary, I gave way to frivolities of every kind. I had those ephemeral passions which are the shame of the *salons* of Paris, where each heart searching for a true love is satiated in the pursuit of it, falls into the libertinage of polite society, and ends by being as much astonished at a real passion as the world is at a fine action.

"I imitated others ; I often wounded fresh and candid souls by the same blows which were lacerating me secretly. In spite of the false appearances by which I was judged, I had within me an unconquerable delicacy which I always obeyed. Many a time I was duped when I would have blushed not to be ; and I brought myself into trouble by a natural good faith for which I was thankful in my heart. The world is full of respect for cleverness, under whatever form it shows itself ; results make law. Society, therefore, ascribed to me vices, qualities, victories, and defeats that were not mine, credited me with successes in gallantry of which I knew nothing, blamed me for actions in which I had no share. My pride made me disdain to refute the calumnies, my vanity led me to accept each flattering mistake. My life was outwardly happy, inwardly miserable. Had it not been for the sorrows that were about to overtake me, I should gradually have lost all my good qualities, and allowed my evil ones to triumph through the continual play of passions, through the abuse of enjoyments which enervate the body, and by those detestable habits of selfishness which wear out, in the end, the springs of the soul.

"I was ruining myself financially, — in this wise : Whatever a man's fortune may be, he is sure to find in Paris some one of superior fortune whom he makes an object of emulation and seeks to surpass. Like so many other harebrained youths, I fell a victim to this ambition ; at the end of four years I was obliged to sell certain portions of my property and mortgage others. Then a terrible blow struck me down. It was nearly two years since I had seen the young girl I had abandoned ; but

at the rate I was living, misfortunes would doubtless have carried me back to her. One evening, in the midst of a gay company, I received a note written in a feeble hand, which contained something like these words:—

“‘I have not long to live; my friend, I wish to see you that I may know the fate of my child, whether he will be yours; and also to soften the regret you may one day feel for my death.’

“The letter horrified me; it revealed the secret sufferings of the past, while it opened the mysteries of the future. I went out on foot, not waiting for my carriage, and crossed the whole of Paris, driven by remorse, and grasped by the violence of my first feeling,—a feeling which became lasting as soon as I saw my victim. The neatness under which her poverty was hidden gave signs of the anguish of her life. She spared me what shame she could, and spoke of her sufferings with a noble reserve after I had solemnly promised to adopt her child. She died, monsieur,—in spite of the care I lavished upon her, in spite of all the resources of science, which I vainly invoked. All my care, my too-late devotion, only served to make her last moments less bitter. She had toiled ceaselessly to maintain her child. The maternal sentiment had supported her under poverty, but not against the keenest of her griefs,—my desertion. A hundred times she had thought of appealing to me; a hundred times her woman’s pride arrested her. She had wept—but never cursed me—as she thought that of all the gold I was pouring out in floods upon my caprices, not one drop was turned, by a passing memory, to help the lives of mother and child in that poor home.

“A good priest of the Saint-Sulpice, whose merciful words restored her calm of mind, helped her at this crisis, and she had come to dry her tears in the shadow of the altars where she sought for hope. The anguish I had poured into her heart was insensibly appeased. One day she overheard her child repeat the words, ‘My father!’—words that she had never taught him; and in that moment she forgave me. But, through grief and tears, through daily and nightly toil, her health gave way. Religion, bringing its consolations and the courage to bear the woes of life, had come too late. She was attacked with heart-disease, caused by grief, by the expectant hope of my return,—a hope forever rising and forever crushed. At last, feeling that she was near the end, she wrote me from her death-bed those few short words, free from reproach, inspired by religion and also by her belief in me. She knew, she said, I was more blind than wicked; she even went so far as to blame herself for the woman’s pride that carried her too far. ‘If I had written earlier,’ she said, ‘perhaps we might have had time to make our child legitimate by marriage.’

“Monsieur, beside that bed where I learned to know the value of a devoted heart, I changed forever. I was at an age when the eyes still weep. During the last days of that precious life, my actions and my tears testified to the repentance of a man who was stricken to the heart. I recognized too late that soul of quality which the frivolities of the world, the emptiness and selfishness of women of fashion had taught me to desire and prompted me to seek. Weary of shams, weary of listening to lies, I had asked for love, the true love of

which fictitious passions had driven me to dream ; and it was here, killed by me ; I could not keep it, though it still was mine.

“ Four years’ experience had revealed to me my true character. My temperament, the nature of my imagination, my religious principles, dormant rather than destroyed, my style of mind, my reserved and sensitive heart, — all these had been leading me for some time past to solve the troubles of my life in the enjoyments of the heart, and to spend the passions of my nature in the delights of family life, the truest of all delights. By dint of floundering in the void of existence without an object, of pursuing pleasures devoid of all the sentiments that ought to embellish them, the thought of a home life had lately roused my keenest emotions. Thus the change which now took place in my life and morals was lasting, though sudden. My southern nature, deteriorating under the influence of a life in Paris, would assuredly not have led me to pity the fate of a deserted girl if some trifler had related it in a merry company, — in France, the horror of a crime disappears in the wit of a clever saying, — but in presence of this celestial creature, who was to me without reproach, all sophistries were silenced : the coffin was there ; my child smiled at me, not knowing that I had killed its mother. She died ; she died happy in the knowledge that I loved her, and that in this new love nothing was due to pity, nor even to the tie that now united us so closely. Never shall I forget the last hours of that dying life, when, with love reconquered and her mother-heart at rest, her sorrows ceased. The plenty and the luxury with which she was surrounded, the joy

of her child, who seemed more lovely in the pretty garments of his age, were to her the pledges of a happy future for the little being in whom she thought to live again.

“The vicar of Saint-Sulpice, a witness to my despair, made it all the deeper by giving me no empty consolations ; he laid the gravity of my obligations before me. But I did not need a spur ; my conscience spoke loudly enough. A woman had nobly trusted me ; I had lied to her in saying that I loved her, and then I had betrayed her. I had caused the sorrows and misfortunes of a poor girl who, having accepted the humiliations of the world for my sake, ought to have been sacred to me. She died forgiving me, forgetting all her wrongs, for she rested on the promises of a man who had already broken his word to her. After giving me her girlish faith, Agathe found in her heart another faith to give me, the faith of a mother. Oh ! monsieur, that child ! her child ! God alone knows what it was to me. The dear little being, like its mother, was graceful in all its movements, in its speech, in its ideas ; but to me — it was more than a child. It was my pardon, my honor. I cherished it like a father, but I longed to love it as its mother would have loved it ; I thought my remorse would change to joy if I could make it feel it had never lost its mother’s breast. Thus I was bound to my son by every human tie, and every religious hope. I had in my heart all the tenderness that God has given to mothers. The voice of the child made me quiver ; I looked at him for hours as he lay asleep, with an ever-springing joy ; often my tears fell on his brow. I taught him to come to me and say his prayers on my

bed as soon as he waked in the morning. What sweet emotions the pure and simple prayer of our Lord uttered by the pure fresh lips of the child have given me, — but also, what terrible anguish! One morning, after saying, ‘Our Father, who art in heaven,’ he stopped: ‘Why not “our mother?”’ he asked me. The words overpowered me. I adored my son, but I had cast more than one fatal misfortune upon his life. Though the laws recognize the faults of youth, and have in a measure protected them, by giving (with some unwillingness) a legal existence to natural children, the world has added the support of insurmountable prejudices to the reluctance of the law.

“From this period of my life, monsieur, come the serious reflections I have made on the basis of societies, on their machinery, on the duties of man, and the morality which ought to actuate every citizen. Genius apprehends at once the ties which bind the soul of man to the destinies of society; religion inspires pure minds with the principles necessary to happiness; but repentance alone can imprint them on an ardent and impetuous imagination: repentance enlightened me. I lived for a child, and through that child I was led to meditate on great social questions. I resolved to supply him in advance with every means of success, and thus pave a sure way for his future elevation. I had him taught English, German, Italian, Spanish, and surrounded him with persons of those countries whose business it was to make him acquire from infancy the pronunciation of each language. To my great joy, I found him a child of excellent disposition, and I made the most of it by instructing him while I

amused him. I endeavored to let not a single false idea get into his mind ; above all, I tried to accustom him early to use his intelligence. I sought to give him the clear vision that generalizes with sure yet rapid glance, and the patience which condescends to minute details ; and finally, I taught him how to suffer and keep silence. I never allowed an impure, nor even an unclean, word to be uttered in his hearing ; it was my first care that the men and the things about him should help to ennoble him, to uplift his soul, to give him a love of truth, a horror of falsehood, and make him simple and natural in language, in actions, and in manners. The liveliness of his imagination made him eagerly seize all lessons from the outside ; and the readiness of his mental faculties made other studies easy to him. What a charming plant he was to cultivate ! Ah ! what happiness is equal to a mother's ! I understood now how his mother had lived and borne her sorrows.

“ This, monsieur, was the great event of my life ; and now I come to the catastrophe which drove me to this district. I shall tell you the commonest of all histories, and the simplest, yet to me it is terrible.

“ After giving, for several years, all my thoughts and care to the child of whom I sought to make a man, my solitude began to frighten me ; my son was growing up, he would soon leave me. Love is the principle of existence in my soul. I felt the need of affection, a need ever disappointed, yet ever reviving and growing stronger with age. I had in me all the conditions for a true attachment. I had been tried ; I knew the meaning of constancy, and the happiness of turning a sacrifice into a pleasure ; the woman I loved must needs be first

in our joint actions and in all my thoughts. I delighted in imagining a love that should reach the degree of certainty when emotions so interpenetrate two beings that happiness passes into the life, the look, the words, and is no longer an external agitation. Love is then to the life what religion is to the soul; it inspires it, sustains and enlightens it. I interpreted conjugal love differently from other men; I felt that its beauty, its glory, lay precisely in those things which prove the ruin of many households. I keenly felt the moral grandeur of a double life so closely shared that the common acts of existence should afford no obstacle to the permanence of feeling.

“But where find hearts beating so perfectly with isochronous movement (pardon the scientific term) that such celestial union could be brought about? If they exist, nature or chance throws them so far asunder that they cannot join; or they know each other too late and are too soon separated by death. Such fatality must have a meaning, but I have never searched for it. I suffer too much from my wounds to study them. Perhaps perfect happiness is a prodigy that our species cannot perpetuate.

“My desire for a marriage of this kind had other motives. I was without friends. To me the world was a desert. There is something about me which impedes the tender phenomenon of the union of souls. Persons have sought me out, but nothing has ever kept them near me, no matter what advances I made towards them. With many men, I have silenced my sense of what the world calls superiority; I walked at their pace, adopted their ideas, laughed with their laugh, and made the best of their faults of character. If I had

attained to fame I would have sold it to them for a little affection. These men left me without a regret. Snares and sufferings are all that Paris holds for hearts that seek true sentiments. Wherever I turned in social life the earth crumbled under my feet. To some persons my kindliness meant weakness; yet if I showed the talons of a man conscious of the strength to grasp authority, they thought me wicked. To others, the happy laugh which ceases at twenty and which we are half-ashamed to indulge in later, was a source of ridicule; I amused them. In these days the world is bored, yet it will have gravity in its most trifling intercourse. It is a horrible epoch, which bows before the polished, cold and commonplace man whom it hates, and yet obeys. I discovered later the reason of these apparent inconsistencies. Mediocrity, monsieur, is sufficient for the ordinary purposes of life; it is the daily garb of society; all that emerges from the soft shadow cast by commonplace people is too striking for the daily uses of the world; genius and originality are jewels which it locks away, and only wears on great occasions.

“And so, monsieur, solitary as I was in the midst of Paris, finding nothing to satisfy me in the world around me, which took my all and returned me nothing, unable to have enough of my child to fill my soul because I was a man and not a woman, — it came to pass that one day, when I felt my life growing chill and I bent beneath the weight of my secret wretchedness, I met the woman who was to make me know love in all its violence, the honor of a love avowed, love, with its teeming hopes of happiness — in short, Love!

“ I had renewed my intimacy with the old friend of my father who formerly looked after my interests. It was in his house that I met the young girl for whom I felt the love that was to last as long as life itself. The older a man grows, monsieur, the more he recognizes the immense influence of ideas upon events. Certain estimable prejudices, growing out of noble religious ideas, were the actual cause of my great misfortune. The young girl I speak of belonged to an extremely pious family, whose Catholic opinions originated in the spirit of a sect improperly called Jansenist, which was formerly the cause of much trouble in France, — you know why ? ”

“ No,” said Genestas.

“ Jansenius, bishop of Ypres, wrote a book supposed to contain teachings in conflict with those of the Holy See. Later, the actual text of the book was thought not to be heretical ; and some writers even went so far as to deny the existence of any such doctrines. This originally insignificant dispute gave birth to two parties in the Gallican church, — that of the Jansenists, and that of the Jesuits. There were great men on both sides. It was a struggle between two powerful bodies. The Jansenists accused the Jesuits of teaching a relaxed morality, and themselves affected an excessive purity of manners and principles ; they were, in France, a species of Catholic Puritan, if the terms can be allied. During the French Revolution, there grew up, as a result of the unimportant schism produced by the Concordat, a body of purer Catholics, who would not recognize the bishops appointed by the revolutionary power and the transactions of the Pope. This faithful flock

formed what was called the 'little church,' whose shepherds taught, as did the Jansenists, the exemplary regularity of life and conduct which appears to be a law necessary to the existence of all proscribed and persecuted sects. Several Jansenist families belonged to the 'little church.' The parents of this young girl were among those who embraced the two puritanisms; both equally stern, and giving to the character and countenance of their followers an imposing dignity; for it is the property of absolute doctrines to ennoble simple actions by connecting them with the future life. From a sense of that life comes a splendid and winning purity of heart, a respect for one's self and others, a delicate sense of justice and injustice; also a vast charity, at the same time a strict equity, nay, an implacable one; and a profound horror of every vice, above all for falsehood, which includes them all.

"I cannot recall any moments in my life more delightful than those during which, at the house of my old friend, I saw and admired for the first time this timid, true young girl, trained to obedience, in whom all the special virtues of that faith shone forth without producing in her any sign of pride. Her supple and slender figure lent a grace to her movements that no austerity could hide; the outline of her face had the distinction and her features the delicacy of a young girl of noble blood; her glance was gentle yet proud, her brow calm; her head was crowned with abundant hair, simply braided, and yet it served, unknown to her, as an adornment. Captain, she was to me the type of a perfection which each man finds in the woman who inspires him with love. To love at all must he not see in her

the quality of that beauty which his individual nature dreams of, and prefigures? When I spoke to her, she answered simply, without alacrity nor yet false modesty, — unaware of the pleasure which the harmony of her voice with her exterior beauty gave me. These angels all bear the same signs, by which the heart knows them; the same sweetness of voice, the same tenderness in the eyes, the same purity of the skin, and something pretty in the gestures. Those gifts all harmonize and blend, and unite to charm although we are not able to seize the essence of their charm. A divine soul breathes in every movement. I loved her passionately. This love awakened and then satisfied the feelings it aroused: ambition, fortune, all my dreams were realized. Beautiful, noble, rich, and well brought up, she possessed advantages which the world arbitrarily demands in a woman placed in the high position I desired to reach; well educated, she was able to express her thoughts with the sparkling eloquence that is so rare and yet so common in France, where the pretty words of many women are mere emptiness, while hers betrayed a wit that was full of sense. Above all, she had a deep sense of her own dignity that made others respect her; I know of no quality more beautiful in a wife —

“I pause, captain; who can picture the woman he loves! between her and the man who loves her mysteries pre-exist which escape analysis.

“I took my old friend into my confidence; he presented me to the family, and gave me the support of his honorable character. Though I was received at first with the cold reserve peculiar to exclusive persons, who, however, never give up a friend they once accept, later on

I came to be more familiarly welcomed. No doubt I owed this evidence of regard to the conduct I pursued under these circumstances. Notwithstanding my passion, I did nothing to lower myself in my own eyes; I showed no servile desire to please; I did not flatter those on whom my fate depended. I showed myself for what I was, — and, above all, a man. After my character became known, my old friend, as anxious as I was myself to put an end to my sad celibacy, spoke to the father of my wishes; they were favorably received, though still with the cautious reserve that people of the world seldom lay aside. From a desire to help me to a ‘good marriage,’ — an expression which turns a solemn act into a commercial enterprise, where each side seeks to deceive the other, — the old man kept silence on what he called the error of my youth. He feared that the existence of my child might rouse moral objections in comparison with which all questions of fortune were as nothing, and so lead to a rupture of the marriage. He was right. ‘It is,’ he said to me, ‘a matter which can very well be settled between you and your wife, from whom you will easily obtain absolution.’ To silence my scruples, he employed all the specious arguments which the ordinary wisdom of the world suggests. I must declare, monsieur, that my own feelings prompted me to lay the whole matter loyally before the head of the family; but the inflexibility of his character led me to pause and reflect, and the possible consequences of my avowal alarmed me. I basely compromised with my conscience; I resolved to wait, and win from my future wife such decided proofs of affection that my happiness could not be jeopardized by the confession. The resolution to

avow all at a favorable moment seemed to justify the sophistries of the world and of my old friend.

"I was now received by the parents of the young girl on the footing of a future husband, though without the knowledge of the friends of the family. The distinctive characteristic of these pious families is unlimited reserve; they keep silence about everything, even matters that are of no consequence. You would hardly believe, monsieur, how much this gentle gravity, mingling with every action, adds depth to the character of their feelings. Among such families all occupations are useful; the women employ their leisure in making clothes for the poor; the talk is never frivolous; laughter, indeed, is not banished, but the jests are simple and without acrimony. At first, the conversation, stripped of the piquancy which gossip and scandalous tales give to the conversations of the world, seemed strange to me. The father and uncle read the newspapers, but my future wife had never cast her eyes upon those pages which all, even the most harmless, tell of the crimes and vices of the community. Later, however, my soul received from that pure atmosphere the same impression which our eyes receive from neutral tints, — a soft repose, a soothing quietude. The life was outwardly one of frightful monotony. The interior aspect of the house had a chilling influence; every morning I saw the furniture, even the pieces that were in daily use, ranged exactly in their proper places, and the smallest articles in scrupulous order.

"And yet, this manner of life won upon me. After conquering the first repugnance of a man accustomed to the pleasures of variety in the luxury and stir of

Parisian life, I perceived the advantages of such an existence. It develops ideas to their fullest extent, and stimulates involuntary meditation: the heart rules, nothing distracts it, it comes finally to the perception of something, I know not what, as limitless as the ocean. In such a life, as in a cloister, where the same things are ever and ever recurring, thoughts detach themselves from things, and return, unshackled, to the infinitude of feelings. To a man as sincerely in love as I was, the silence, the simplicity of life, the almost monastic repetition of the same acts performed at the same hours, all gave greater force to love. In such deep calm, the slightest motion, a word, a gesture, became of enormous interest. Nothing being forced or conventional in the expression of feelings, a smile, a glance gave, to those whose hearts were one, inexhaustible methods of expressing themselves. I began to understand that language, with all its magnificent possibilities, has nothing so varied or so eloquent as the communion of glances and the harmony of smiles. Many a time did I send my soul to my lips or to my eyes, and tell the ardor of my love in speechless utterance to the young girl who sat beside me, — always tranquil, and ignorant of the secret meaning of my presence; for her parents wished to leave her free to choose in the most important act of her life. But no sooner does a true passion enter into us than the mere presence of the woman we love satisfies our most violent desires. When admitted to her presence our happiness is like that of a Christian in communion with God. To see her, is it not to adore her? If for me, more than for any other, it was torture to be denied the right to utter the transports of my heart, if I was

forced to bury in its depths those burning words which fail to render the more burning emotions they endeavor to express, yet this constraint, by imprisoning my passion, made it rush forth more vehemently in little things, and the trifling circumstances of our common life grew to have an excessive value. To admire her for hours together; to wait for an answer and listen with delight to the modulations of her voice, that I might find within them the secret of her thoughts; to watch the trembling of her fingers as I gave her some object for which she searched; to find pretexts to lightly touch her dress, her hair, or take her hand, or make her speak more than she wished to speak, — all these nothings were great events to me. During such hours of ecstasy, the eyes, the gestures, the voice convey to the soul mysterious proofs of love. Such was my language, — the only utterance which the virginal reserve of this young girl permitted. For her manners never changed; she was with me as a sister with a brother; only, as my passion grew, the contrast between my words and hers, between her looks and mine, became more striking, and I ended by divining that her timid silence was the only means by which she was able to express her feelings. Was she not always in the *salon* when I came? did she not stay there till my visit, perhaps expected and desired, was over? such silent tribute, did it not reveal the secret of her innocent soul? surely, she listened to my words with a pleasure she knew not how to hide.

“This reserve in our manners, and the repression of our love, at last put the parents out of patience. Seeing that I was nearly as timid as their daughter, they judged

favorably of my character, and thought me worthy of their esteem. The father and mother spoke to my old friend, and said many flattering things; they called me their adopted son, and praised more especially my moral principles. It is quite true that I had renewed my youth. In that pure and religious circle the man of thirty-two became once more the youth full of beliefs. Summer was nearly over; the business which had kept the family in Paris, contrary to their habits, was finished, and in the month of September they were to leave for a country-seat in Auvergne, where the father invited me to spend two months in an old château nestling among the mountains of the Cantal. When this cordial invitation was given, I made no immediate answer. My hesitation brought me the sweetest, most delightful involuntary expression by which a modest young girl ever betrayed the secrets of her heart. Evelina — oh, God!" exclaimed Benassis, who became silent and thoughtful.

"Forgive me, Captain Bluteau," he resumed, after a long pause. "For the first time in twelve years I have uttered a name that hovers ever in my thoughts — that a voice cries to me when I sleep. Evelina, then, since I have named her, raised her head with a movement whose rapidity contrasted strongly with the innate quietness of all her movements. She looked at me without pride, but with a sort of pained anxiety; then she blushed, and lowered her eyes. The very slowness with which the lids were dropped gave me a pleasure I know not how to express, a pleasure hitherto unknown to me. I could only answer in a broken voice. The emotions of my heart spoke straight to hers, and

she thanked me with a look that was soft and almost tearful. We had told each other all.

"I went with the family to their country-place. From the day when our hearts understood each other, all things about us wore a new aspect; nothing now was without a meaning. Though true love is ever the same, it takes the form of our ideas, and is always like and unlike to itself in each being; for in each the passion is a unique growth, expressing individual sympathies. The poet and the philosopher alone know the depth of meaning in a definition of love now grown commonplace, namely, the egotism of a double self. We love ourselves in that *other*. But if the expression of love is so diverse that each pair of lovers have not their like throughout the centuries, love nevertheless follows a law in its ways of utterance. All young girls, even the most chaste, use the same language, and differ only in the grace of their ideas. But there was this exception in the case of Evelina: to any other young girl the innocent betrayal of her emotions would have seemed natural; to her it was a concession made to tumultuous feelings, which overcame the habitual calm of her religious youth; each furtive glance was violently snatched from her by love. This constant struggle between her heart and her principles gave to the slightest action of her life, so tranquil on the surface yet so deeply stirred within, a steadfast character, greatly superior to the exaggerations of most young girls whose manners soon take the tone of the society about them.

"During the journey, Evelina observed the beauties of nature and talked of them with enthusiasm. When we are forbidden to express the joy the presence of our

beloved gives us we pour the feelings that overflow our hearts upon external objects; and those our hidden feelings glorify. The poetry of the landscape which flitted past our eyes was, for each of us, an interpreter fully understood; the praises that we gave it contained, to our own souls, the secrets of our love. Evelina's mother amused herself, every now and then, with a few feminine sallies at her daughter's expense. 'You have travelled through this valley twenty times, my dear child, without seeming to admire it,' she said, after some speech of Evelina's that seemed to her too warm. 'Mother, I was not then old enough to understand this sort of beauty.' Forgive me for relating this trifle, which can have no charm for you, captain; to me the simple answer brought untold happiness, welling up in the glance she gave me. So, each village lighted by the rising sun, each ivy-covered ruin that we looked at together, served to imprint more deeply on our souls, by the memory of a material thing, the tender emotions in which, for us, our future lay.

"We reached the château, where I stayed about forty days. That short period, monsieur, is the only time of complete happiness which heaven has granted me. I tasted joys unknown to the dwellers in a city. I felt the pleasure two lovers feel in living under the same roof; marrying each other, as it were, before marriage, walking together along the fields, able to be at times alone, sitting beneath a tree in the depths of some lovely valley, looking at the buildings of an old mill, snatching some half-given confidence from the tender talks that lead us a little more, and more, into each other's hearts. Ah! monsieur, life in the open air, the

beauties of heaven and earth, harmonize so well with the delights and the perfections of the soul ! To smile upon each other as we contemplate the skies, to mingle quiet speech with the song of birds beneath the dewy foliage, to loiter homeward with reluctant step, listening to the bells that summon us all too soon ; to admire together some glimpse of scenery, follow the capricious flight of insects, or watch the golden-fly, that fragile creation allied to pure and loving girlhood, — is not this to be daily drawn a little nearer towards heaven ? To me, those forty days hold memories that color all my life, — memories the more beautiful and infinite, because never again was I to meet with comprehension. To-day many a scene, simple apparently, though full of bitter meaning for a wounded heart, recalls the vanished yet unforgotten love. Do you remember the sunset light on the cottage of little Jacques, — how at one moment the sunbeams glorified all nature, and then, suddenly, the scene grew dark and gloomy ? Those aspects, so widely different, showed me a faithful picture of this period of my life. Monsieur, I received from Evelina the first, the sole, sublime proof of love that an innocent girl is allowed to give, — all the dearer because it is given fur- tively ; precious promise of love, the echo of the language spoken in a better world. Sure, then, of being loved, I swore in my thoughts to tell her all, to keep no secret from her. I felt ashamed that I had delayed so long to speak to her of the troubles I had brought upon myself.

“ Unfortunately, on the morrow of that happy day, I received a letter from my son’s tutor, which made me tremble for the life so dear to me. I left, without con- fiding my secret to Evelina, and without giving her

parents any other reason than important business. My departure alarmed them. Fearing that I had some entanglement of the heart, they wrote to Paris to inquire into my conduct. Inconsistently with their religious principles, they distrusted me without giving me a chance to meet their suspicions. One of their friends informed them, without my knowledge, of the events of my youth, exaggerated my errors, and dwelt on the existence of my child, which I had, they said, intentionally concealed. When, soon after, I wrote to my intended father-in-law, I received no answer. The family returned to Paris; I called at the house and was not admitted. Much alarmed, I sent my old friend to inquire the motives of a conduct I could not understand. When he learned them, the good old man nobly took the whole blame of my silence upon himself, tried to defend me, but did no good. Motives of interest and morality were too powerful in the family, their prejudices too fixed; it was impossible to change their resolution.

“My despair knew no bounds. At first I tried to quell the storm; but my letters were sent back to me unopened. When all human means were exhausted, when the father and mother had told my old friend, who was in truth the real cause of my misfortune, that they would forever refuse their daughter to a man who had upon his conscience the death of a woman and the life of a natural son, even if Evelina implored them on her knees — then, monsieur, there remained to me but one last ray of hope, feeble as the willow twig to which some unhappy wretch clings when drowning. I dared to hope that Evelina’s love would be stronger than the

resolution of her parents. Her father might have concealed from her his motives for thus killing our love ; I wished her to decide my fate on a knowledge of the facts. I wrote to her. Alas ! monsieur, it was in tears and sorrow, and not without many hesitations, that I wrote the only love-letter of my life. I have but a vague remembrance of the words despair dictated to me ; doubtless I told my Evelina that if she were sincere and true she could not, she ought not to love any man but me ; otherwise her life would be a falsehood ; she would be false to her future husband or to me. I asked her, was it not a betrayal of all the womanly virtues to deny to a lost lover the faithfulness she would have given him had the marriage, already celebrated in our hearts, taken place ? what woman would not think it dearer to be bound by the promises of the heart than by the chains of law ? I defended my errors, appealing to the purity of innocence, forgetting nothing that could, as I thought, soften a noble and generous heart. As I have told you all, I will show you her answer, and my final reply."

Benassis rose, and went to his own room. He soon returned, holding in his hand a well worn portfolio, from which he took, not without strong emotion, a few papers carelessly folded, which trembled in his hand.

"Here is the fatal letter," he said. "The child who wrote the words did not know what value the very paper that contained her thoughts would have for me. Here," he added, showing another letter, "is the last cry that my anguish drew from me ; you shall judge of it presently. My old friend carried my supplication, delivered it secretly, and humiliated his gray hairs by

imploping Evelina to read it and to answer it. Here is what she wrote to me: —

“ ‘MONSIEUR, —’

“ ‘To me who was her ‘loved one,’ the chaste name she had found to express a chaste love — she called me *monsieur*! That one word told all. But listen to the letter: —

“ ‘It is cruel for a young girl to discover the duplicity of a man to whom her life was to have been confided; nevertheless, I ought to forgive you, for we all are weak. Your letter has touched me; but do not write again; I cannot bear the pain it causes me. We are parted forever. The excuses you offer have affected me; they have stifled the feeling that had risen in my heart against you, — I loved so much to think you pure! But you and I are too feeble against my father’s will. Yes, monsieur, I have dared to speak in your behalf. To beseech my parents I have risen above the greatest fear I ever felt, I have even cast aside the habits of my life. And now I yield to your prayers; I am guilty of doing wrong in answering you without my father’s knowledge; but my mother knows of it; her indulgence, leaving me free to be this one last moment with you, proves to me how much she loves me, and strengthens me in my obedience to the wishes of my family — which I was very near to disregarding.

“ ‘Monsieur, I write to you for the first and last time. I forgive you, without reserve, for the sorrows you have brought upon my life. Yes, you are right; a first love can never be effaced. I am no longer a pure young girl; I could never be a chaste wife. I know not therefore what may be my destiny. Monsieur, the year that you have filled will echo through my life; but I will not blame you. I shall be ever loved — you say — Why do you tell me so? Can those words calm the

troubled soul of a poor solitary girl? Have you not wrecked my future life, and given me memories that must forever cling to me? If, now, I can only give myself to Jesus, will he accept a bleeding heart? But he does not send afflictions without a purpose; they have a meaning; he meant to call me to himself — to him, my only refuge. Monsieur, there is nothing left for me in life. You can cheat your grief with the natural ambitions of men; this is not meant as a reproach, but rather as a sort of consolation. I think that if we both bear to-day a heavy burden, my share is the heaviest. He in whom I put my trust, and of whom you can feel no jealousy, he has joined our lives together, and he puts them asunder according to his will. I have seen that your religious beliefs were not based upon the pure and living faith that alone can help us to endure our earthly woes. Monsieur, if God deigns to hear the entreaties of my fervent ceaseless prayer, he will grant you the illuminations of his spirit.

“Farewell, you who should have been my guide; you, whom I called my loved one without shame; you, for whom I still can pray without dishonor. God orders our lives according to his will; he may call you to himself before me: if I am left alone in the world, then, monsieur, confide to me your child.”

“This letter, full of generous sentiments, disappointed my hopes,” resumed Benassis. “At first I could think only of my sorrow; later, I welcomed the balm she had tried to pour into my wounds, forgetting herself. But in the first moments of my despair I wrote to her somewhat harshly.

“*MADemoiselle*, — That word alone will tell you that I resign you and obey you. A man still finds some sweetness, terrible though it be, in obeying the woman he loves — even when she bids him leave her. You are right; I stand

condemned in my own eyes. Once, I cast away the devotion of a young girl; it is fitting that my love should now be rejected. But I little thought that the only woman to whom I have made gift of my soul should be the instrument of this vengeance. I could not have suspected such harshness, perhaps I ought to say such virtue, in a heart which seemed to me so tender and so loving. At this moment the full strength of my love is revealed to me; it survives the bitterest of all griefs, — the contempt you show for me in breaking, without regret, the ties that bound us.

“ ‘Farewell forever. I keep the humble pride of repentance; and I will seek a way to expiate the errors for which you, my mediator in heaven, are without pity. God may be less cruel. My sufferings — sufferings filled with you — are the punishment of a wounded heart that will henceforth bleed in solitude. Yes, for wounded hearts, silence and shade. No other image of love can enter my heart. Though I am not a woman, I felt, as you feel, that when I said, “I love thee,” it was a vow for life. Yes, those words, whispered in my beloved’s ear, were not a lie. If I could change, your contempt would be justified: I cannot; you will remain the idol of my solitary life. Repentance and love are virtues that should inspire all other virtues; and so, despite the gulf that parts us, you will still be the principle of my actions. Though you have filled my heart with bitterness, no bitter thoughts of you are in it: what beginning of better things would that be which did not purify my soul of the leaven of anger?

“ ‘Farewell, then, only heart that I have loved in this world, and from which I am driven. Was ever farewell so tender or so full of feeling? bears it not away a soul, a life, that no power on earth can resuscitate?

“ ‘Adieu — to you, peace; to me, suffering.’ ”

Genestas and Benassis looked at each other for a moment, each in the grasp of thoughts that can never be communicated.

“After sending this last letter, the rough copy of which was, as you see, preserved, and is to me the representative of all my joys, now withered,” said Benassis, “I fell into a state of unutterable depression. The earthly ties that hold a man to life were bound together in this one hope, and it was lost. I had to bid farewell to the delights of wedded love, to let die the generous feelings that were budding in the depths of my heart. The prayers of a repentant soul, thirsting for good, for beauty, virtue, uprightness, were repulsed by persons who were truly religious. Monsieur, at first my mind was tossed about by frantic resolutions, but the sight of my son controlled them. My attachment to him increased through the misfortunes of which he was the innocent cause, and for which I alone was to blame. He became my consolation. At thirty-four years of age I could still hope to be nobly useful to my country: I resolved to make myself a distinguished man, and wipe out by fame or by the splendor of power the stain on my son’s birth. How many noble emotions I owe to him; and how living a life he made me live during the days when I worked for his future! — I stifle!” cried Benassis, in a choking voice. “Even at the end of eleven years, I cannot dwell upon that fatal period. That child, monsieur — I lost him!”

The doctor was silent, and hid his face in his hands, letting them fall when he recovered calmness. Genestas saw, not without emotion, the tears that bathed his eyes.

“Monsieur, this thunderbolt uprooted me,” continued Benassis; “I did not recover a sane moral sense until I had transplanted myself into another soil than

that of social life. It was not until later that I saw the hand of God in my misfortunes ; when I did, I resigned myself and listened to his voice. My resignation could not be speedy ; my higher nature had to be awakened. I spent the last fires of my natural impetuosity in that final struggle ; I hesitated long before I chose the only course it was fitting for a Catholic to take. At first, I wished to kill myself. These events developed an excessive melancholy in my mind, and I coldly resolved on this act of despair. I considered it allowable to quit life, since life itself quitted us. Suicide seemed to be a natural act. Sorrows, I thought, produce the same ravages upon the soul of man that extreme sufferings produce upon his body ; surely, the intelligent being suffering under a moral malady has the right to kill himself, as a lamb, giddy with the staggers, breaks its head against a tree. Are the ills of the soul easier to cure than those of the body ? I doubt it. I know not which is the greater coward, the man who is always hoping, or he who no longer hopes. Suicide seemed to me the last stage of a moral malady, just as natural death is the last stage of a physical malady ; but since the moral life is placed under the control of the human will, its cessation ought surely to be in accordance with the action of the mind. It is the thought that kills, not the pistol. Moreover, does not the fact that mere chance can strike us down in the happiest moment of our lives, absolve a man who declines to live any longer a wretched life ?

“ And yet, monsieur, these meditations, which filled my mind in those first days of mourning, lifted me to higher considerations. For a time, I shared the noble

beliefs of pagan antiquity, — always, however, demanding from them better rights for man. I believed I could, by the light of modern torches, dig deeper than the ancients had dug into questions formerly reduced to systems. Epicurus permitted suicide. Was it not the natural outcome of his philosophy? He required, at any price, the gratification of his senses; that enjoyment failing him, it was natural and permissible, he thought, for the animate being to return to the repose of inanimate nature. The sole end of man being happiness and the hope of happiness, death became a good to one who suffered and suffered hopelessly, and to take it voluntarily was a final act of wisdom. That act, however, he neither praised nor blamed; he merely said, pouring a libation to Bacchus, ‘Death is no cause for laughter, nor for tears.’

“Zeno, and the other Stoics, though of a higher morality and more imbued with the doctrine of duty than the Epicureans, recommended suicide in certain cases. They reasoned thus: Man differs from the brutes in that he is the sovereign master of his own person. Take away from him the right of life and death over himself, and you make him the slave of men and of events. This right of life and death, well understood, is the effective counterpoise of natural and social evils: this individual right, if made over by man to his fellows begets tyranny. Man’s power cannot exist unless he has an unlimited freedom of action. Has he to escape the shameful consequences of an irremediable wrongdoing? the common man swallows the shame and lives on; the wise man drinks the hemlock and dies. Has he to endure for the rest of his life the gout which burns

his bones, or a cancer which eats up his face? the wise man sees that the moment has come; he sends away the quacks, and says a last farewell to friends whose lives he would otherwise sadden by his existence. Or it may be that he falls under the power of a tyrant whom he has combated with weapons in his hand — what shall he do? The oath of allegiance is offered; he must take it, or lose his head: the fool lays his neck on the block, the coward takes the oath, the wise man strikes to his own heart a last blow for liberty. ‘Free men,’ cries the Stoic, ‘learn to keep yourselves free! — free from your passions, by sacrificing them to duty; free from your fellows, by the poison or the dagger which puts you beyond their reach; free of fate, by drawing the line beyond which it can have no grip upon you; free of prejudices, by never confounding them with duties; free of all animal apprehensions, by knowing how to surmount the grosser instincts which chain down the lives of so many unfortunates.’

“After clearing these arguments from the philosophic tangle of the ancients, I believed I had found a Christian sanction for them under the laws of free-will, which God has given to men to enable him to judge them at his tribunal in the last day; I said to myself,

I will answer for my deed there.’ But, monsieur, these very reasonings forced me to think of the morrow of death; and soon I found myself face to face with my early beliefs.

“The whole of human life becomes of grave importance if eternity bears its weight upon our lightest resolutions. When the thought of the future life acts with all its force upon the soul of man, and makes him feel within

himself something unspeakably vast that puts him in contact with the infinite, all things change strangely. From such a point of view life is very grand and very petty. The sense of my own errors had never led me to think of heaven so long as I could find comfort for my sorrows on earth. To love, to consecrate myself to the happiness of one woman, to be the head of a family, — that surely was a noble way of expiating the errors which stung my soul. When that way came to nought, still there was expiation in consecrating my life to that of my child. But when, after these efforts of my soul, disdain and death wrapped me in eternal mourning, when all my feelings were wounded and I could see nothing left to me here below, — then I raised my eyes to heaven, and I saw God.

“However, I still tried to make religion an accomplice in my death. I re-read the Gospels, and found no text in which suicide was forbidden; but that reading filled me, penetrated me with the divine thought of the Saviour of men. Certainly he has said nothing of immortality, but he has told us of his Father’s mansions. He has nowhere forbidden parricide, but he condemns all evil. The glory of his apostles, and the proof of their mission, is less that they gave laws than that they spread throughout the earth the new spirit of the new law. The courage that a man displays in killing himself now seemed to me his own condemnation. If he has the strength to die, he ought to have the strength to struggle: to refuse to suffer is weakness, not strength. Moreover, to quit this life from disappointment — is not that to abjure the Christian faith which Jesus has anchored on these sublime words: ‘Blessed are they

who mourn?' Suicide no longer seemed to me permissible in any crisis of human life; not even to a man who, through a false conception of the grandeur of the spirit, kills himself a moment before the executioner lets fall the axe. Jesus Christ, in suffering himself to be crucified, taught us to obey all human laws, no matter how unjustly applied. The word RESIGNATION graven on his cross, intelligible to those who have the eyes to read the sacred writing, appeared to me in all its divine clearness.

"I still possessed about eighty thousand francs; at first I wished to go far from men, to wear out my life in the depths of some solitary region; but misanthropy, a form of vanity hidden under the quills of a hedgehog, is not a Catholic virtue. The heart of a misanthropist never bleeds, it contracts; and mine bled from every vein. Thinking over the laws of the Church and the help she offers to the afflicted, I came to understand the value of prayer in solitude, and I determined to 'enter religion'—to use the beautiful expression of our forefathers. Though firmly resolved on this, I nevertheless reserved the right of examining the ways by which I could attain that end. After turning the remains of my estate into money, I left Paris tranquilly. The *peace of God* was a hope that could not fail me. Attracted from the first by the rule of Saint Bruno, I made my way on foot to the Grande Chartreuse, full of earnest thoughts. That day was a solemn one for me. I was not prepared for the magnificent scenery which opens along the road which leads from Grenoble through this valley, where superhuman power is visible at every step. Those beetling rocks, those precipices, those torrents that make their voices heard amid the silence, that

solitude hemmed in by mountains and yet limitless, that sanctuary to which man's barren wonder alone can penetrate, that wilderness of horror, softened by nature's picturesque creations, those primeval pine-trees and those plants of a day — such things in themselves were enough to make me serious. It would be difficult to laugh in traversing the desert of Saint Bruno; there, all melancholy sentiments prevail. I saw the Grande Chartreuse; I walked beneath those ancient, silent arches; I heard the water of the spring falling, drop by drop, below the cloisters. I entered a cell that I might take the measure of my own nothingness; I breathed the peace profound my predecessor had known there, and I read with tender emotion the words he had written above his door, following the customs of a monastery; all the precepts of the life I sought to live were in those three Latin words, — *Fuge, late, tace.*"

Genestas bowed his head as if he understood them.

"I made my decision," continued Benassis. "This cell, panelled in pine, this hard bed, this loneliness, met the wants of my soul. The Brethren were in the chapel; I went to pray among them. There my resolution vanished. Monsieur, I will not judge the Catholic church; I am strongly orthodox, I believe in its works and in its laws. But as I listened to the chanted prayers of those old men, nameless to the world and dead to the world, I perceived, even in the depths of the cloister, a species of sublime selfishness. Such retreat from life can profit none but the man himself; it is a slow suicide. I do not condemn it, monsieur. If the Church has opened such tombs, they are doubtless necessary to some Christians who are useless to the

world. I believed that I should do better by making my repentance useful to the lives of others. On my journey back from the monastery, I thought over the ways in which I might put in practice that form of resignation. I imagined the life of a common sailor, and condemned myself in thought to serve my country in the lowest rank, renouncing all intellectual functions. But, although it was a life of toil and devotion, it seemed to me of too little use. Should I not frustrate God's intentions? If he had given me powers of mind, was it not my duty to use them for the good of others? Moreover, — if I may speak quite frankly, — I felt within my soul a need of expansion which mere mechanical obligations would have galled. In a sailor's life I could see no nourishment for the loving-kindness which results from my organization, just as each flower exhales its own especial perfume.

“I was, as I have already told you, obliged to pass the night in this hamlet. During that night I believed I heard the voice of God in the compassion to which the state of this poor valley moved me. I had tasted the agonizing joys of motherhood; I resolved to give myself wholly up to them, to satisfy the maternal instinct in a wider sphere than that of a mother, by becoming a sister of mercy to the whole region, and continually healing the wounds of the poor. I saw the finger of God marking out my destiny when I remembered that the first serious thought of my youth had led me to the study of medicine, and I resolved to practise my profession here. Moreover, *for wounded hearts, silence and shade*: I had said this in my letter; that which I had promised myself to do, I would carry out;

and so I entered the path of silence and resignation. The *Fuge, late, tace*, of the Carthusian is my motto in this place; my work is an active prayer; my moral suicide is the life of my district, over which I love to sow with outstretched hand the seeds of happiness and joy, — giving that I have not.

“The habit of living among the peasantry, my complete separation from the world, have greatly altered me. My face has changed its expression; it is now used to the sun, which has hardened and wrinkled it. I have the appearance and demeanor of a countryman in dress, speech, negligence of non-essentials, and a dislike to all that is affectation. My friends in Paris, or the dainty women on whom I formerly danced attendance, could not recognize in me a man who was once the fashion, the sybarite accustomed to the luxuries, the frippery, and the refinements of Paris. The external things of life are now absolutely indifferent to me, as they are to all who follow the train of one idea. I have no other object in life but to leave it. I desire to do nothing to hasten nor yet retard my end; but I shall lie down to die without regret when the day of my last illness comes.

“Monsieur, I have now told you, in all sincerity, the events of my life before I came to live in this place. I have not concealed my errors: they were great; they were in common with those of other men. I have suffered much, I suffer daily; but I see in my sufferings the promise of a happy future. And yet, in spite of my resignation, there are pangs I know not how to bear. To-day, in your presence, unknown to you, I well-nigh gave way to my inward torture.”

Genestas sprang from his chair.

"Yes, Captain Bluteau, you were present. You remember that you showed me the bed of mère Colas after we had put Jacques into his? Well, if I am unable to see any child without thinking of the angel I have lost, you can understand my distress as I held in my arms one that was stricken with death. I cannot look composedly on a child."

Genestas grew pale.

"Yes, the pretty blond heads, the innocent faces of the children I meet, speak to me of my sorrows, and re-awaken the agony. It is horrible to me to think so many people thank me for the little good I do, when that good is but the fruit of my remorse. Captain, you alone know the secret of my life. If I had drawn my courage from a purer source than the memory of my errors, I should be a happier man, — but then, there would be nothing to tell you about my life."

CHAPTER V.

ELEGIES.

AS BENASSIS ceased speaking, he was struck with the expression of deep solicitude on the soldier's face. Touched to have been so well understood, he half-regretted having distressed his guest, and said to him:—

“But, Captain Bluteau, my misfortunes —”

“Don't call me Captain Bluteau,” cried Genestas, interrupting the doctor, and jumping up with a hasty movement that implied a sort of inward vexation. “There's no Captain Bluteau, I'm a scoundrel!”

Benassis looked at him with amazement, as he moved here and there about the *salon*, like a bumble-bee trying to get out of a room it has got into by mistake.

“But who are you, then?” asked Benassis.

“Ah! that indeed!” replied the soldier, coming back to the doctor; whom, however, he dared not face.

“I have deceived you,” he added, in an altered voice.

“For the first time in my life I have acted a lie. I am well punished, for now I cannot tell you the object of my visit, nor the reason for such cursed spying. Since I have, as I may say, looked into your soul, I would rather let you strike me than hear you call me Bluteau. You may forgive me this imposture, but I shall never

forgive myself, — I, Pierre Joseph Genestas, who to save his life would not have lied before a court-martial!"

"Are you Captain Genestas?" cried Benassis, rising. He took the officer's hand and shook it very affectionately, saying: "Monsieur, we are, as you remarked just now, friends without knowing it. I have long desired to meet you, for I have heard so much of you from Monsieur Gravier, — 'a man out of Plutarch,' he used to say to me."

"I am not from Plutarch," answered Genestas. "I am unworthy of you; I deserve a thrashing. I ought to confess my secret — But no, no! I have done well to wear a mask, and come and see for myself what manner of man you are. And now I see plainly I must hold my tongue. If I had frankly told you my object at the start, I should have given you pain. God forbid that I should add to your griefs."

"But I do not understand you, captain."

"We'll let the matter drop. I am not a sick man; I have spent a good day; and I shall go away to-morrow morning. When you come to Grenoble, you'll find one friend the more, and not a fair-weather friend either. The purse, the sabre, the blood of Pierre Joseph Genestas, all are yours. You have sown your seed on good ground. When I get my retirement, I shall find some sort of hole and get myself made mayor of it, and try to imitate you. I shall lack your science, but I'll study."

"You will do well, monsieur; the property-owner who employs his time in correcting the mistakes and raising the methods of work in his district, does as

much good as the best of doctors. If one relieves the sufferings of a few men, the other helps to cure the wounds of his country. But you excite my curiosity. Can I be useful to you in any way?"

"Useful!" exclaimed the captain in a broken voice. "Good God! my dear Monsieur Benassis, it is impossible for me now to mention the service I came to ask of you. I've killed many a Christian in my day, — you can kill people and still have a good heart, — but rough as I seem to you, there are some things I am able to comprehend."

"Speak frankly."

"I don't wish to inflict pain upon you."

"Ah! captain, I can bear a great deal."

"Monsieur," said the captain, trembling, "it concerns the life of a child."

Benassis's forehead contracted suddenly; but he made a motion as if to ask Genestas to continue.

"A child," resumed the captain, "whose life might still be saved by close and constant watching. But where was I to find a doctor willing to devote himself to one patient? Certainly not in a city. I had heard of you as an excellent man, and yet I was afraid of being misled by your reputation. I thought before confiding my little fellow to this Monsieur Benassis, of whom I was told such great things, that I would study him, and now —"

"Enough," said the doctor, "is the child yours?"

"No, my good friend, no. But to explain the matter, I shall have to tell you a tale in which I play rather a sorry part. You have confided to me your secrets, and I can surely do the same to you."

"Wait a moment, captain," said the doctor, calling Jacquotte, who came at once, and whom he told to bring his tea. "The truth is, captain, when everybody is asleep, I can't sleep. My sorrows oppress me, and I try to forget them in tea. It produces a sort of nervous inebriation, a sleep without which I could not live. Do you still refuse it?"

"I should prefer a little of your Hermitage," said Genestas.

"So be it. Jacquotte," he said to the servant, "bring the wine and some biscuits, — to each his own night-cap," added the doctor, addressing his guest.

"That tea must do you a great deal of harm," said Genestas.

"It gives me horrible attacks of gout. But I can't give up the habit; it is too soothing. It gives me a few moments every night when life is less of a burden. Come, I am ready to listen to your story; it may help to quiet the feelings which my own recollections have just evoked."

"Well," said Genestas, putting his empty glass on the mantel-shelf, "after the retreat from Moscow, my regiment stopped to recruit in a little town in Poland. We bought horses at their weight in gold; and stayed in garrison until the Emperor returned. So far, so good. I must tell you that I then had a friend. During the retreat my life was more than once saved by a cavalry sergeant, named Renard, who did things for me that must needs make men friends, — outside the demands of discipline, of course. We lodged in the same house, — one of those wooden rat-traps which contain a whole family, though Frenchmen would n't think of

stabling a horse in them. This particular hovel belonged to Jews, who carried on their forty-and-one ways of making money in it; and the old Jew father, whose fingers were never too frozen to grab gold, had made a very good thing for himself out of our retreat. Those creatures live in dirt, and die in filthy lucre! The house was built over a cellar. — all in wood, understand, — in which cellar the old fellow had hidden away his children, especially a daughter, handsome as Jewesses usually are when they keep themselves clean and are not blonde. She was seventeen years old, white as snow, velvety eyes, lashes as black as a rat's tail, glossy clustering hair that one wanted to handle, — in short, a perfect beauty. I discovered this hiding-place one night when they thought I'd gone to bed, and I was walking up and down the street quietly, smoking my pipe. The children were swarming and crawling about, like a litter of puppies; 't was funny to see them. The father and mother were at supper. By dint of gazing fixedly through the cloud of smoke which the old Jew was blowing from his pipe, I saw the young girl sitting there, like a brand-new napoleon among a lot of copper sous.

“My dear Benassis,” said the captain, after a momentary pause, “I have never had time to reflect about love. Yet when I saw that young girl, I knew that I had never really felt it; but here it was, in my head, in my heart, and everywhere else. I had fallen in love from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, oh, violently! I stood still, smoking my pipe and looking at the Jewess, till she put out her candle and went to bed. Impossible for me to go to sleep! I stood

about all night, filling my pipe, smoking it, and walking up and down the street. I had never been like that before. It was the only time in my life I thought of marrying. When it was daylight, I saddled my horse and galloped him for two hours across the country to clear my head. I nearly foundered the beast without knowing what I was about."

Genestas stopped, looked uneasily at his new friend, and then said : —

"Excuse me, Benassis ; I am no orator, I talk as it comes. If I were in a *salon*, I should be embarrassed, but with you, here, in the country —"

"Go on," said the doctor.

"When I got back to my room, I found Renard all of a fluster. Thinking I was killed in a duel, he was cleaning his pistols, and meaning to pick a quarrel with whoever had sent me to the shades. Ha ! that's just like an old stager ! I confided my love to him, and showed him the kennel of children. As Renard knew the lingo of these outlandish folk, I asked him to help me in making my proposals to the father and mother, and in setting up an intercourse with Judith — her name was Judith. So, monsieur, for two weeks I was the happiest of men, and every night the old Jew invited us to sup with Judith. You know all about such things, so I sha'n't put you out of patience, — and yet, if you don't know the joys of tobacco, you can't realize the happiness of an honest man quietly smoking his pipe, with his friend Renard and the father of the daughter, and gazing at his princess. Yes, it was very agreeable. But I must tell you that Renard was a young man of good connections, a Parisian. His

father was a wholesale grocer, who had brought him up to be a notary; but the draft caught him, and he had to bid adieu to the inkstand. With a figure made to wear a uniform, and the face of a girl, he knew the art of cajoling everybody he came across. It was he whom Judith loved; she cared for me as much as a horse cares for roast chicken.

“Well, while I was smoking in ecstasy, and traveling to the moon as I looked at Judith, Renard, who you see had n’t stolen his name, was sapping his mine. The traitor came to terms with the girl, and they were married after the fashion of those parts, without waiting for permissions from France, which would have taken a long while to come. Renard did promise to marry her according to French law, if the marriage was ever attacked; as it was, however, once in France, Madame Renard was nothing more than Mademoiselle Judith. If I had known all that, I should have killed Renard, sharp, without giving him time to sneeze; but the fact was, father, mother, daughter and fox played into each other’s hands like thieves at a fair. While I smoked my pipe and worshipped Judith for a saint in a niche, Renard was making his appointments and carrying on his little game. You are the only person to whom I have ever told this story, which I call infamous; I have always wondered how a man who would die of shame if he stole a bit of gold, can rob his friend of wife and happiness without a scruple. However that may be, there were my traitors married and happy, while I, like an imbecile, sat gazing at Judith, and playing tenor in the farce of throwing dust in my eyes. But, you must know, they paid singularly dear for their

deception. On the word of an honest man, God gives more attention to the things of this world than we think for, as you shall see.

“Down came the Russians. The campaign of 1813 began. We were surrounded. One fine morning the order was issued to be on the battle-field of Lutzen by a certain hour. The Emperor knew what he was about when he ordered us to be off at once. The Russians had turned our flank. Our colonel got into a scrape by going to say good-by to a Polish lady who lived a mile from the town, and the advance-guard of the Cossacks pounced upon him and his escort. We had only time to mount and form, in front of the town, before we had to rush into a cavalry skirmish and drive the Russians back, so as to slip quietly off during the night. We charged and fought for three hours, and did some fine feats of arms. While we were engaged, the guns and the ammunition waggons and all our supplies and material got away in the advance; for we had, you must know, a park of artillery and a large quantity of powder which the Emperor was desperately in need of, and of course they had to be got to him at any cost. Our resistance imposed on the Russians; they thought we must surely be supported by an army corps. However, before long, the scouts let them know their mistake, and they found out they had only a regiment of cavalry and a few infantry stragglers in front of them. So, monsieur, towards evening they made such a hot attack, meaning to demolish us, that a good many of us were left on the field.

“We were surrounded. Renard and I were in the front rank. I saw Renard charging and fighting like

a demon—he was thinking of his wife. Thanks to him we regained the town, which the sick had put into a state of defence; ah! but 'twas pitiful. He and I got there last; we found the way barred by a lot of Cossacks, through whom we spurred. One of the savages was about to spear me with a lance; Renard saw him and dashed his horse between us to ward off the blow; the poor beast, a fine animal, faith! received it, and as he fell, dragged Renard and the Cossack with him. I killed the Cossack, and took Renard in my arms and put him before me on my horse, like a sack of wheat. 'Adieu, captain, it is all over with me,' said Renard. 'We'll see about that,' said I. By that time, I had got into the town; I dismounted, and propped him in the angle of a house, on a little straw. His head was crushed and the brains were in his hair; but he could speak—ah! he was a gallant fellow. 'We are quits,' he said; 'I have given you my life, but I took Judith from you. Take care of her child, if she has one, and marry her.'

“Monsieur, at first I left him like a dog; but when my rage was over I went back; he was dead. The Cossacks had set fire to the town. I recollected Judith, and went to fetch her; mounted her behind me, and thanks to the speed of my horse, I regained the regiment, which, meantime, had made good its retreat. As for the Jew and his family, they had disappeared like rats in a barn; Judith alone was left, waiting for Renard. I told her nothing at first, as you'll readily believe. Monsieur, I had to take charge of that woman all through the disasters of the campaign of 1813; find her lodging, make her comfortable,—in short, care for

her; and I really think she hardly perceived the state the army was in. I took care to keep her always thirty miles ahead of us, on the road to France. She gave birth to a son while we were fighting at Hanau. I was wounded in that affair, and rejoined Judith in Strasbourg; then I came back to Paris, where I had the great misfortune to be invalided from my wound during the campaign of France. If it had n't been for that unlucky chance, I should have entered the grenadiers of the Guard, to which the Emperor had promoted me.

“ So, monsieur, the end of it was, I had been obliged to support a woman and a child that did not belong to me, and I had three ribs broken. You can easily believe that my pay was not the revenue of France. Father Renard, an old shark without any teeth, would have nothing to say to his daughter-in-law; and the Jew father had vanished. Judith was dying. One morning she wept as she bathed my wound. ‘ Judith,’ said I, ‘ your child has no one to look to.’ ‘ Neither have I,’ she answered. ‘ Bah!’ I said, ‘ we will get the necessary papers, and I will marry you myself, and acknowledge as mine the child of — ’ I could n't finish. Ah! my dear monsieur, what is there that one would n't do for such a look of thanks from dying eyes as Judith gave me? I knew then that I still loved her, and from that day her little one came into my heart. While the papers were being got ready, and the father and mother Jews were on their way, the poor woman grew worse. The evening before her death, she had the strength to dress and deck herself, and go through all the usual ceremonies, and sign their heaps of papers. Then, when

her son had a name and a father, she lay down again; I kissed her hands and her forehead, and she died.

"That was my wedding. The day after, having bought the few feet of earth where the poor girl lies, I realized that I was the father of an orphan. During the campaign of 1815 I put him out to nurse. Since then, without anybody's knowing my true history, which is not a pleasant one to tell, I have taken care of the little monkey as if he were mine; his Jew grandfather has gone to the devil, ruined, and is wandering with his family somewhere between Russia and Persia. There's a chance that he may make a fortune there, for it seems he understands the business of precious stones. I put the boy at a preparatory school; but lately I have allowed him to be pressed so hard in mathematics to get him into the *École Polytechnique* and see him graduate with credit, that the poor little fellow has fallen ill. He has a weak chest. The Paris doctors think he might have a chance if he could run wild in the mountains and if, above all, he were taken proper care of and watched at all hours by a man of judgment. I thought of you, and I came here to reconnoître your ideas and your ways of life. After what you have told me, I cannot put the distress of caring for a sick child upon you — even though we are now such good friends."

"Captain," said Benassis, after a moment's silence, "bring me Judith's child. God doubtless means me to bear this last trial, and I will do so. I offer my sufferings to Him, whose son died on the cross. But my feelings during your recital were sweet and tender, and is not that a favorable augury?"

Genestas pressed both hands of Benassis within his

own, not restraining the tears which rose in his eyes and rolled slowly down his tanned cheeks.

"Let us keep the secret of it," he said.

"Yes, captain; but you are not drinking your wine."

"I am not thirsty," said Genestas; "in fact, I am half-bewildered."

"When will you bring him to me?"

"To-morrow, if you like. He has been in Grenoble for the last two days."

"Well, then, start early in the morning and come back at once. I'll expect you at the house of my Fosseuse, where we will all breakfast together."

"Agreed," said Genestas.

The two friends rose to go to bed, bidding each other good-night. When they reached the landing which separated their two rooms, Genestas put his light on the window-sill and turned to Benassis:—

"By the God who made me!" he cried with naïve enthusiasm, "I won't part from you this night without saying that you, third among Christians, have made me feel that there is something *up there*," and he pointed to the skies.

The doctor answered with a smile that was full of sadness, and wrung the hand Genestas held out to him very affectionately.

Before dawn of the next day, Genestas started for the city, and about noon he was again upon the high-road between the village and Grenoble, near the path which led up to the cottage of the Fosseuse. He was driving one of those light open cars with four wheels, drawn by one horse, which are frequently met on all

the roads of that mountainous region. The captain was accompanied by a thin, frail lad, who seemed to be about twelve years old, though he was in fact nearly sixteen. Before leaving the carriage, Genestas looked about him in all directions, to find some peasant working in the fields who would take the vehicle to Benassis's stable, for the narrowness of the way did not allow him to drive up to the house. The game-keeper, happening to come out upon the road at this moment, relieved Genestas of his difficulty, and the latter, with his adopted son, started on foot among the mountain-paths to keep his appointment.

"You'll be delighted to run wild for a whole year over this beautiful country, won't you, Adrien? — to learn how to hunt, and ride a horse, instead of getting pale over your books; hey? — Look, see!"

Adrien cast the weary glance of a sick child over the valley, — evidently indifferent, as most young people are, to the beauties of nature, — and then, without pausing in his walk, he said, "You are very kind, father."

Genestas was hurt by the languid indifference of the lad, and did not speak again till they reached the house of the Fosseuse.

"You are punctual, captain," cried Benassis, rising from a wooden bench on which he had been sitting.

But he immediately sat down again and looked thoughtfully at Adrien, slowly examining the pallid, weary face of the boy; not without admiring the fine oval lines which predominated on what was really a noble countenance. The child was the living image of his mother, — inheriting her olive skin, and her fine black eyes full of spiritual melancholy. All the characteristics

of the beauty peculiar to the Jewesses of Poland distinguished that handsome head, which seemed too heavy for the fragile body that bore it.

"Do you sleep well, my little man?" asked Benassis.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Show me your knees; turn up your trousers."

Adrien blushed, unfastened his garters and showed a knee to the doctor, who felt it carefully.

"Good. Now speak, shout — shout loudly."

Adrien shouted.

"That will do. Now give me your hands."

The lad held out his soft white hands, blue-veined like those of a woman.

"What school were you at in Paris?"

"At the Saint-Louis."

"The master in your dormitory read his breviary during the night, didn't he?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And you could not go to sleep again?"

Adrien not replying, Genestas said, —

"The head-master was a very worthy priest, and he advised me to take my little man away on account of his health."

"Well," answered Benassis, with a clear, penetrating look into the lad's eyes, "here's a good chance. Yes, we'll make a man of him. You and I will live together like comrades, my boy. We'll go early to bed, and rise early. I'll teach your son to ride a horse, captain. After a month or so devoted to making him a new stomach on a milk diet, I'll get him a hunting outfit and a license to shoot, and turn him over to Butifer; they can go after the chamois together.

Give the boy five or six months of such a life and you won't know him again, captain. Butifer will be happy; I know the fellow's ways—he'll have you over in Switzerland, and across the Alps, my little friend; he'll make you scramble up to the tops of those peaks over there, and you'll grow six inches in six months. Butifer is an honest fellow," he added, turning to Genestas. "We can safely give him a sum of money to defray the expenses of such a journey and the hunting. The responsibility will keep him steady for six months; for him, that will be just so much gained."

Genestas's face brightened more and more as the doctor spoke.

"Come, let us go to breakfast. The Fosseuse is impatient to see you," said Benassis, giving a little tap to Adrien's cheek.

"Then you don't think him consumptive?" asked the captain, taking the doctor's arm and leading him aside.

"Not more than you or I."

"Then, what is the matter with him?"

"Bah!" said Benassis, "he is at a bad moment, that's all."

The Fosseuse here showed herself on the threshold of her door, and Genestas noticed, not without surprise, her simple and coquettish attire. She was no longer the peasant-girl of the night before, but an elegant young woman, who gave him a few glances beneath which he felt he was feeble. He turned his eyes to the table, which was without a cloth, but so well waxed that it shone as if varnished. On it were eggs, butter, a *pâté*, and mountain strawberries whose fragrance filled the air. The poor girl had put flowers all

about the room, showing plainly that for her at least the day was a fête. At sight of it all, Genestas could not help coveting the simple house with its pretty lawn; and he looked at their peasant mistress with an air that expressed both hope and fear. Then he turned his eyes on Adrien, to whom the Fosseuse was serving eggs and paying ceremonious attention.

"Captain," said Benassis, "you know the condition on which you receive hospitality here. You must tell my Fosseuse some military tale."

"We must first let monsieur breakfast comfortably," said the Fosseuse, "and after he has taken his coffee—"

"Yes, truly I will;" replied the captain, "though I shall put a condition to my tale. You must tell us some adventure of your former life."

"But, monsieur," she said blushing, "nothing ever happened to me that is worth telling. Will you have some more of this rice pâté, my little friend," she said to Adrien, seeing that his plate was empty.

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"The pâté is delicious," remarked Genestas.

"What will you say to her coffee *à la crème*!" cried Benassis.

"I would rather listen to our pretty hostess."

"You are beginning badly, Genestas," said the doctor. "Listen, my child," he added, turning to the Fosseuse, whose hand he pressed. "This officer, whom you see beside you, hides a good heart under a stern exterior; you can speak at your ease before him. But speak, or hold your tongue, just as you like; we will not urge you. My poor child, if you are ever to be understood in this world it will be by the three persons

who are now with you. Tell us your past loves; that will not be trenching on the actual secrets of your heart."

"Here is the coffee, which Mariette is bringing in," she answered. "When you are all served I will tell you my early loves; but Monsieur Genestas is not to forget his promise," she added, giving the captain a glance that was both modest and provocative.

"I am incapable of doing so, mademoiselle," said Genestas, respectfully.

"When I was sixteen," said the Fosseuse, "although I was weakly, I was forced to beg my bread on the highways of Savoie. I slept at Échelles, in a great manger full of straw. The innkeeper who let me sleep there was a good man, but his wife could not endure me, and was always scolding me. That made me unhappy, for I was not a bad little beggar. I prayed to God night and morning; I never stole; I went my way as Heaven willed, and begged my food, for I did not know how to work; I was very poorly. — incapable of labor, or of looking after my health. Well, I was driven away from the inn, on account of a dog. Without friends or relations ever since I was born, I had never seen on any face a look that did me good. The old woman Morin, who took me when a baby, was dead: she had been kind to me, but I cannot remember that she ever caressed me. The poor creature tilled the earth like a man, and if she ever did take me on her knee, she also rapped my fingers with a spoon if I ate the soup too fast out of the porringer. Poor old woman! there's never a day I do not pray for her. May the good God give her, up there, a

happier life than she had here below ; specially a better bed : she was always complaining of the hard mattress on which we slept together.

“ You can’t imagine, my dear gentlemen,” resumed the Fosseuse after a momentary pause, “ how it hurts one’s soul to get nothing but harsh words and rebuffs, and looks which cut you to the heart like knives. I have lived among old paupers who did not mind it a bit ; but I was not born for such a life. A mere ‘ no ’ always made me weep. Many an evening I came back sadder than ever to my manger ; and I never was comforted till I had said my prayers. In all God’s earth there was no creature on whose heart I could rest mine. The blue sky was my only friend. I always felt happy when the sky was all blue. When the wind swept away the clouds, I lay among the rocks and looked up at it. Then I dreamed I was a great lady. By dint of gazing into heaven, I thought I was bathed in its blue ; I lived up there in my soul, nothing tied me down ; I mounted up, and up, — and I was glad.

“ But to come back to my loves,” she said, changing her tone. “ I must tell you that the innkeeper’s dog had a little puppy, dainty as a lady, all white, with black spots on its paws, — oh, I see the cherub now ! The poor little thing was the only creature that ever gave me a kind look in those days. I gave him the best of what I had to eat ; he understood me ; he always came to meet me at night when I got back ; he was not ashamed of my poverty, and would jump upon me and lick my feet. Ah ! there was something so kind in his eyes, so grateful, that often I cried to see it. As I was saying, that was the only creature that loved me.

In winter he slept at my feet. I suffered so when he was whipped that I taught him not to go about the houses and steal bones ; and after a while he was satisfied to eat my bread. If I were sad, he would stand in front of me and look in my eyes, as much as to say : ‘ You are sad, my poor Fosseuse.’ If travellers flung me sous, he picked them out of the dust, and brought them to me. When I had him for a friend, I was less unhappy. I put aside a few sous every day, trying to get fifty francs and buy him of Père Manseau, the innkeeper. One day the wife saw the dog was fond of me, and took it into her head to dote on him. Now you must know he hated her. Animals spy out souls ; they guess who loves them in a minute. I had a piece of gold sewn into the top of my petticoat ; so I said to Père Manseau : ‘ My dear monsieur, I meant to have offered you a year’s savings for your dog, but I see that your wife wants him for herself, though she does not really care for him. Sell him to me now for twenty francs ; and here they are.’ ‘ No, my little one,’ he said, ‘ put up your twenty francs. God preserve me from taking the money of the poor. Keep the dog. If my wife makes a fuss, do you go away.’ His wife made a terrible scene about it ; ah, mercy me ! you would have thought the house was on fire ; you don’t know what she said. Seeing that the dog was given to me out of friendship, and that she could not get him, she had him poisoned. My poor dear dog died in my arms ; I wept over him as if he were my child, and buried him under a fir-tree.

“ Oh ! you don’t know what I laid in that grave. I said to myself, as I sat beside it, that I should be alone upon earth, that nothing would prosper with me, that I

should become what I was before I had him, — a creature without a human being belonging to me; I should see no look of friendliness in any face. I sat there all that night, beneath the stars, praying God to have pity upon me. When I went back to the high-road, I found a poor little boy, only ten years old, who had no hands. ‘The good God has heard me,’ I thought; for I had never prayed to him as I did that night. ‘I will take care of the poor child,’ I said to myself. ‘We will beg together, and I will be his mother. Two together, we shall do well; perhaps I shall have more courage for him than I had for myself.’ At first the little one seemed happy; ’twould have been hard not to be. I did everything he wished, I gave him all I had that was best; in fact, I was his slave, and he tyrannized over me; but that seemed better than to be alone. Ah! as soon as the little wretch knew I had a gold piece sewn in my petticoat, he undid the stitches, and stole it from me, — stole the price of my poor dog, that I was keeping to say masses for its soul: a child without hands! it made me shudder.

“Ah!” she went on, “that theft disheartened me more for life than I know how to tell. Was all I loved to perish in my hands? One day I saw a pretty open carriage coming up the side of the mountain near Échelles. In it was a young lady as beautiful as the Virgin Mary, and a young man who looked very like her. ‘Oh! see that pretty girl,’ the young man said to her as he threw me a bit of money. None but you, Monsieur Benassis, can know the pleasure that compliment gave me, — but the gentleman ought not to have flung me the money. Then, impelled by I don’t know

what sort of whimsey in my head. I set off running along some paths which make a short cut, and got to the rocks of the Échelles before the carriage, which crawled up. I saw the young man again. He was quite surprised to see me; and I felt so glad my heart beat up into my throat; something. I don't know what, drew me to him. After he recognized me I started again, feeling very sure that he and the young lady would go to see the cascades of Couz. When they got out of the carriage, they saw me again under the walnut-trees which line the road; and that time they questioned me, and seemed to take an interest in me. Never in my life did I hear such sweet voices. I thought about them for months, always hoping they would come back. I would have given two years of my life to see him again, he was so gentle. — There! up to the day I first saw Monsieur Benassis, those were the great events of my life; for when my mistress sent me away because I wore her miserable ball-dress, I only pitied her. I forgave her; and to tell the honest truth, if you'll permit me to say it, I thought myself a great deal better than she, though she is a countess."

"Well," said Genestas, after a moment's silence. "you see that God is your friend, for here you are in clover."

At these words the Fosseuse looked at Benassis with eyes full of gratitude.

"I wish I were rich!" exclaimed the officer.

The exclamation was followed by total silence.

"You owe me a story now," said the Fosseuse in a coaxing voice.

"And I will tell you one," answered Genestas. "The evening before the battle of Friedland," he continued, after a pause, "I had been sent with a despatch to the headquarters of General Davoust, and I was returning to my bivouac, when, at the angle of a road, I came face to face with the Emperor. Napoleon looked at me. 'You are Captain Genestas?' he said. 'Yes, sire.' 'Don't keep along that road,' he said; 'take the other to the left; it will bring you sooner to your division.' You can't imagine what a tone of kindness the Emperor put into those few words—he who had so much upon his mind. At that very moment he was reconnoitring his battlefield for the next day. I tell you that little matter to show what a memory he had, and also to let you see I was one of those whose face he knew. In 1815 I took the oath. If it had n't been for that, I should have been a colonel to-day; but I never had the least intention of betraying the Bourbons. At the time, I thought only of defending France. I commanded a squadron of horse attached to the grenadiers of the Guard, and, in spite of the pain I still felt from my wound, I swung my sabre at Waterloo.

"Well," continued the captain, "when all was over, I accompanied Napoleon to Paris. Then, in spite of his orders, I followed him to Rochefort; it comforted me to keep watch and see that no harm happened to him by the way. So, when he came to the shores of the sea and paced up and down, he saw me standing sentinel ten paces from him. 'Well, Genestas,' he said, 'so we are not dead yet?' The words broke my heart. If you had heard them, you'd have shuddered,

as I did, from head to foot. He pointed to a cursed English ship blockading the port, and said, 'When I look at that, I regret I did not drown myself in the blood of my Guard.'

"Yes," resumed Genestas, looking at the doctor and the Fosseuse, "those were his very words. 'The marshals who dissuaded you from charging yourself,' I said to him, 'and kept you in your carriage, were not your true friends.' 'Come with me!' he cried, quickly. 'Sire,' I said, 'gladly would I go with you, but I have a little one hanging to me just now who has lost his mother, and I am not free.' So it was Adrien here who kept me from going to Saint Helena. 'See,' said Napoleon, 'I have never given you anything; you are not one of those who always had one hand full and the other open; here is the snuff-box I have used during this last campaign. I give it to you. Stay in France; before all else she needs brave men. Remain in the army, and think of me. You are the last of my Egyptians whom I shall see on the soil of France.' He gave me the little snuff-box. 'Engrave two words upon it. Honor, Country,' he said; 'they are the history of our last two campaigns.' Then his suite rejoined him, and I spent the rest of the morning with them. The Emperor came and went along the shore. He was quite calm, but at times his brows contracted. By midday the embarkation was thought impossible. The English knew he was in Rochefort; either he must deliver himself up to them, or recross France. We were all anxious. The minutes weighed like hours. Napoleon was between the Bourbons, who would have shot him, and the English, who are not honorable

men; for they can never wash out the shame of casting upon a barren rock the enemy who went to them for hospitality.

"At this anxious moment some one—I don't know who—presented to him a lieutenant, Doret, a sailor who came to propose a means of getting him to America. At that time there was a government brig in port, also a merchant vessel. 'Captain,' said the Emperor, 'how will you manage it?' 'Sire,' answered the man, 'you will embark on the merchantman; I with a few devoted men will take the brig and run up the Bourbon flag, under shelter of which we can get alongside the Englishman, and set fire to him: we shall blow up together, and you will pass free.' 'We will go with you!' I cried to the man. Napoleon looked at us and said, 'Captain Doret, live, for the good of France.' It was the only time I ever saw Napoleon show emotion. Then he waved his hand, and went away. I left Rochefort when I saw him go on board that English ship. He was lost, and he knew it. There was a traitor in the town who had signalled his presence to his enemies. Knowing this, Napoleon played his last card; he did what he had done before on the field of battle; he went to his enemies, instead of waiting until they came to him. You speak of griefs; no words can tell the despair of those who loved him for himself."

"Where is his snuff-box?" asked the Fosseuse.

"At Grenoble, in a box," answered the captain.

"I will go and see it, if you will let me," she said.

"To think that you have something his fingers have touched! His hand was beautiful?"

"Very beautiful."

"Is it true that he is dead?"

"Yes, truly, he is dead, my poor child."

"I was so little in 1815 that I could only just see his hat in the streets of Grenoble; and then I came near being crushed."

"What good coffee this is," said Genestas. "Well, Adrien, don't you like the country? You will often come and see mademoiselle, will you not?"

The child did not answer; he seemed afraid of looking at the Fosseuse. The doctor did not take his eyes from the lad, and seemed to read into his soul.

"Of course he will come and see her," said Benassis. "Now let us go home. I must get a fresh horse for a long ride I have to take; and while I am gone, you can settle things with Jacquotte."

"Will you come with us?" said Genestas to the Fosseuse.

"Willingly," she replied. "I have several things to return to Madame Jacquotte."

They started on their way to the doctor's house; but the Fosseuse, joyous in the presence of the little company, led them along hidden paths through the wildest part of the mountain.

"Monsieur," she said to Genestas, after a short silence, "you have told me nothing of yourself, and I wanted to hear some of your warlike adventures. I like what you said of Napoleon, but it gives me pain. If you would be so very kind as —"

"She is right enough," said Benassis, gently. "Tell us some of your famous adventures as we walk along. Come, now, something interesting, — like your beam in the barn at Beresina."

"I have so few recollections," said Genestas. "There are some people to whom everything happens, but I've never been the hero of any adventure. Well, here's the only droll thing I ever met with: In 1805, when a sub-lieutenant, I was with the grand army at Austerlitz. Before the taking of Ulm, we fought several engagements where the cavalry had a fine chance, for it was under the command of Murat, who never refused trumps. After one of the first brushes of the campaign, we got possession of a bit of territory where there were a number of fine country-houses. One evening my regiment camped in the park of a château belonging to a young and pretty woman, a countess. I went, naturally, to lodge in the house, and got there as soon as I could, to prevent pillage. As I entered the *salon* a cavalry sergeant had just levelled his carbine at the countess, demanding what she certainly would never have given him. I struck the weapon up with my sabre; it went off and shattered a mirror. Then I dealt the fellow a blow with the flat of my blade, and stretched him on the floor. At the lady's cries, and hearing the shot, all her people rushed in, and threatened me. 'Stop!' said the countess in German to those who wanted to run me through; 'that officer saved my life.' On that they all went out. The lady gave me her handkerchief, a beautiful, embroidered handkerchief, which I still have, and told me I should always be sure of a resting-place in her house; and if I ever had a trouble, no matter what, to come to her, I would find her a sister, a devoted friend, — in short, all sorts of honeyed words. She was as beautiful as a wedding-morn, and as playful as a kitten. We dined

together, and by the next day I was over head and ears in love. Alas! I had to be in line at Guntzberg. — I think that was the place. So I rode away armed with the handkerchief. The fight came off. I kept saying to myself: ‘Oh, for a ball! Among them, is n’t there one for me?’ Of course I didn’t want it in the thigh, for then I could n’t have gone back to the château; but I longed for a good wound in the arm, which my princess would have bathed and caressed. So I dashed like a madman at the enemy. No such luck! I came out safe and sound; and after that, forward, march! no more countess. There, that’s all.”

By this time they had reached Benassis’s house, and the doctor speedily mounted and rode off. When he returned, the cook, to whom Genestas had specially recommended his boy, had already taken possession of Adrien, and had put him in the famous bedroom of Monsieur Gravier. She was much astonished when her master ordered a simple cot-bed to be put in his own room for the lad, — ordering it, too, in so imperative a tone that Jacquotte could say nothing against it. After dinner the captain started on his return to Grenoble, happy in the assurances Benassis again gave him as to the speedy recovery of his boy.

In the early days of December, eight months after he had confided his child to the doctor’s care, Genestas was appointed lieutenant-colonel to a regiment then in garrison at Poitiers. He was thinking of letting Benassis know of his approaching departure, when he received a letter, in which his friend told him of Adrien’s complete recovery. He wrote: —

“The boy has grown tall and strong, and he feels perfectly well. Since you saw him he has profited so much by Butifer’s instructions that he is now as good a shot as our smuggler himself; he is, moreover, brisk and agile, a good walker, and a good horseman. Everything about him has changed. The boy of sixteen, who formerly seemed no more than twelve, now looks to be twenty. His eye is bold and confident. In short, he is a man, and a man whose future you ought now to take into consideration.”

“I’ll go and see Benassis to-morrow, and take his advice as to what profession I shall put the fellow to,” thought Genestas, as he went to a farewell supper given to him by the officers of the regiment; for he was to leave Grenoble in a few days.

When the lieutenant-colonel came home that night, his servant gave him a letter brought by a messenger, who had waited a long time for an answer. Though rather dizzy with the toasts his comrades had been drinking in his honor, Genestas recognized the handwriting of his son, supposed that he was only asking for the gratification of some fancy, and left the letter lying on his table, from which he picked it up the next morning when the fumes of the champagne had been slept away.

“MY DEAR FATHER, —”

“Ah! you little scamp,” he said to himself, “you are never at a loss how to cajole me when you want anything.”

Then he went on, and read these words: —

“The good Monsieur Benassis is dead, —”

The letter dropped from his hands ; and a long time elapsed before he resumed the reading of it.

“ This misfortune has thrown consternation over the whole country, and is the more surprising, because Monsieur Benassis was perfectly well the night before, and showed no signs of illness. The day before yesterday, just as if he knew his end were near, he went to see all his patients, even those that were farthest off: he spoke to every one whom he met, and said, ‘ Good-by, friends.’ He came home as usual, to dine with me, about five o’clock. Jacquotte thought he looked rather red and purplish in the face, but, as the weather was cold, she did not give him a hot footbath, as she was in the habit of doing when the blood seemed to rush to his head. So the poor woman has been crying out, through her tears, for the last two days, — ‘ If I had only given him the bath, he would be alive now.’ ”

“ Monsieur Benassis was very hungry when he came in, and ate a good dinner, and he seemed gayer than usual. We laughed a great deal; indeed, I never heard him laugh so much. After dinner, about seven o’clock, a man from Saint-Laurent-du-Pont came to fetch him for a pressing case. He said to me: ‘ I must go, though my digestion is not finished, and I don’t like to get on horseback in such a state, — especially not when it is so cold; it is enough to kill a man.’ However, he went off.

“ About nine o’clock, Gognelat, the postman, brought a letter for Monsieur Benassis. Jacquotte, who was tired with having washed that day, went to bed, leaving the letter with me, and asking me to prepare the tea by the fire in Monsieur Benassis’s chamber, — where I still sleep on my little cot-bed. I put out the fire in the *salon*, and went upstairs to wait for my good friend. Before putting the letter on the chimney-piece I looked, out of curiosity, at the postmark and the writing. The letter came from Paris, and the address seemed to be written by a woman. I

tell you all this because of the effect the letter had on subsequent events.

"Towards ten o'clock I heard the horse's step. Monsieur Benassis said to Nicolle, 'It is frightfully cold; I don't feel well.' 'Shall I wake Jacquotte?' asked Nicolle. 'No, no,' he answered. Then he came upstairs. 'I have your tea all ready,' I said to him. 'Thank you, Adrien,' he replied, smiling — you know how! It was his last smile. He took off his cravat as if it choked him. 'It is very hot here,' he said. Then he threw himself into his armchair. 'A letter came for you, my good friend; here it is,' I said. He took it, looked at the writing, and exclaimed: 'My God! perhaps she is free!' Then he laid his head back, and his hands trembled. At last he put a light on the table, and opened the letter. The tone of his exclamation had been so startling that I kept looking at him as he read, and I saw him flush and weep. Suddenly, he fell forward, head foremost; I picked him up and saw that his face was purple. 'I am dead,' he said, stammering, and making a frightful effort to straighten himself up. 'Bleed me! bleed me!' he cried, seizing my hand. 'Adrien, burn that letter.' He held it out to me, and I threw it in the fire.

"I called Jacquotte and Nicolle, but only Nicolle heard me; he came, and helped me lay Monsieur Benassis on my little bed. Our good friend no longer knew us. After that he opened his eyes once or twice, but he saw nothing. As Nicolle rode through the village to fetch Monsieur Bordier, the surgeon, he alarmed the whole neighborhood. Monsieur Janvier, Monsieur Dufau, all those whom you know, were the first to get here. Monsieur Benassis was then almost dead; there was no hope. Monsieur Bordier cauterized the soles of the feet, but could get no signs of life. It was an attack of gout combined with a rush of blood to the head.

"As for me, I am very sad and very unhappy. I can truly say that, excepting you, there is no one I loved so much.

I learned more from talking with Monsieur Benassis in the evenings than from all the things they taught me in school.

"The next morning, when his death was known in the village, you can hardly believe what a scene there was. The courtyard, the garden, were filled with people, sobbing and weeping. No one went to work; each related what Monsieur Benassis had said to him the last time they met: some told of all the good he had done to them; those who were less afflicted spoke for others. The crowd increased from hour to hour, and all the people wanted to see him. The sad tidings spread quickly. The people of this district and the neighboring districts seemed to have but one thought: men, women, girls, and boys flocked to the village from a circuit of thirty miles. When the funeral took place, the coffin was borne by the four oldest persons in the village; though not without the greatest difficulty, for between Monsieur Benassis's house and the church there were at least five thousand persons, most of them kneeling as at the procession of the Host. The church could not hold all the people. When the service began there fell, in spite of the sobs, such a deep silence over the crowd that the chants and the bell could be heard to the end of the street. But when it came to removing the body to the new cemetery which Monsieur Benassis had just given to the village, — little thinking, poor man, that he was to be the first buried there, — a great cry arose. Monsieur Janvier wept as he said the prayers, and all present had tears in their eyes.

"At last he was buried. In the evening the crowd dispersed and went to their homes, spreading grief and mourning throughout the country. The next morning, Gondrin, Goguelat, Butifer, the gamekeeper, and some others, set to work to raise a pyramid of earth, twenty feet high, over the spot where he lies, which they are going to sod, and everybody is at work upon it.

"Such, my dear father, are the events of the last few days. The will of Monsieur Benassis was found lying open on his

table, by Monsieur Dufau. The disposition that our kind friend has made of his property has increased, if possible, the attachment that all feel for him, and the grief occasioned by his death. And now, my good father, I hope to receive by Butifer, who carries this note, an answer telling me what I must do. Will you come and fetch me? or am I to join you at Grenoble? Tell me what you wish, and be sure of my perfect obedience.

"Adieu, dear father; I send you the tender regard of your affectionate son,

"ADRIEN GENESTAS."

"Well, I must go there," cried the soldier.

He ordered his horse to be saddled, and started on one of those December mornings when the sky is covered with a gray veil, when the breeze is not strong enough to drive away the fog, through which the dripping houses and the leafless trees no longer wear their customary expression. The silence was grim—there are silences that are dazzling. In fine weather the least sound has a joyous tone, but on a gloomy day Nature is not silent, she is mute. The fog was clinging to the trees and condensing into drops, which dripped slowly upon the fallen leaves like tears. All noise died away in the humid atmosphere. Colonel Genestas, whose heart was wrung by thoughts of death and keen regret, was in sympathy with this saddened nature. He involuntarily compared the soft spring heavens and the valley he had seen so joyous on his previous journey with the melancholy aspect of those leaden skies, those mountains stripped of their green drapery and not yet swathed in robes of snow,—whose effects have a beauty of their own. A naked landscape is a painful sight to a man on his way to an open grave; to him,

that grave seems everywhere. The black fir-trees, which here and there clothed the overhanging heights, blended their images of mourning with the other influences that gripped the soldier's heart, and every time his eyes took in the valley to its full extent, he thought of the sorrow that brooded over it, and the void that was caused by the death of one man.

Genestas soon arrived at the place where he had formerly obtained a cup of milk. Seeing smoke from the chimney of the cottage where the hospital children were taken care of, his thoughts turned more particularly to the beneficent mind of his friend, and he resolved to stop and make a gift to the poor woman in Benassis's name. Fastening his horse to a tree, he opened the door of the house without rapping.

"Good-day, mother," he said to the old woman, whom he found in the chimney-corner with all the children squatting round her. "Do you remember me?"

"Oh, yes! very well, my dear monsieur. You came here on a pretty spring morning, and gave me some money."

"Well, mother, here's more for you and the little ones."

"My good monsieur, I thank you. May God bless you!"

"Don't thank me; you owe the money to our poor friend Monsieur Benassis."

The old woman raised her head and looked at Genestas. "Ah, monsieur," she said, "though he has given his property to our poor valley, and we are all his heirs, we have lost our true wealth: he made everything come right for us."

"Good-by, mother; pray for him," said Genestas, tapping the children lightly with his riding-whip as he turned away.

Then, followed to the door by all the little family and the old woman herself, he mounted his horse and rode on. Taking the lower road to the village, he came to the bridle-path which led up to the cottage of the Fosseuse. When he reached the angle at which the house could be seen, he noticed, with much uneasiness, that the doors and blinds were all closed; then he returned to the village by the great high-road, whose poplars were now leafless. As he entered it, he saw an old laborer dressed in what seemed to be his Sunday clothes, walking all by himself and without his tools.

"Good-day, Moreau."

"Ah! good-day, monsieur—I remember you," said the old man after a moment's silence. "You are the friend of our departed mayor. Oh! monsieur, wouldn't it have been better if the good God had taken a poor rheumatic man like me? I am good for nothing; but he was everybody's joy."

"Can you tell me why the Fosseuse is not at home?"

The old man looked at the sky.

"What o'clock is it, monsieur! There's no sun to tell the time o' day," he said.

"It is ten o'clock."

"Well, then, she is either at mass or in the cemetery. She goes there every day. Though Monsieur Benassis left her an annuity of five hundred francs and that house during her lifetime, she is half-crazy with grief."

"Where are you going, my good man?"

"To the funeral of that poor little Jacques, who was

my nephew. The weakly thing died yesterday morning ; it really seemed as if 't was that dear Monsieur Benassis who kept him alive. Ah ! those young ones, they die ! ” added Moreau, in a tone half-plaintive, half-jocular.

At the entrance to the village, Genestas stopped his horse as he overtook Goguelat and Gondrin, both carrying spades and pickaxes.

“ Well, my old troopers,” he cried, “ we have had the misfortune to lose him.”

“ That’s enough, enough, my officer,” replied Goguelat in a surly tone. “ We know it too well ; we have just been cutting sods for his grave.”

“ It will be a noble life for you to tell of,” said Genestas.

“ Yes,” answered Goguelat, “ barring the battles, he was the Napoleon of our valley.”

When Genestas reached the parsonage, he saw Butifer and Adrien talking at the door with Monsieur Janvier, who had doubtless just returned from saying mass. Butifer, seeing that the officer was about to dismount, came forward to hold his horse, while Adrien threw his arms round his father’s neck. The soldier was greatly moved by that show of tenderness, but he hid his feelings and said : —

“ Well ! you are improved, Adrien. Bless me, you are almost a man, thanks to our poor friend. And I shall not forget master Butifer, your instructor.”

“ Ah ! my colonel,” exclaimed Butifer, “ take me with you to your regiment. Now that Monsieur Benassis is dead, I am afraid of myself. Did n’t he wish me to be a soldier ? well, I’ll do his will. He told you about me, and you’ll be forbearing —”

"Agreed, my good fellow," said Genestas, grasping his hand. "Make yourself easy; I'll get you some good employment— Ah! monsieur le curé."

"Colonel, I am as deeply grieved as all the people in the district, but I feel more keenly than they how irreparable a loss it is to us. That man was an angel. Happily, he died without suffering; God loosened with pitying hand the bonds of a life that was a constant benefit to us."

"May I ask you to come with me to the cemetery; I want to say as it were a farewell to him."

Butifer and Adrien followed Genestas and the curate, who walked a few paces in advance, talking as they went. When the lieutenant-colonel had passed through the village by the road leading to the little lake, he saw, on the hither side of the mountain, a large piece of rocky ground, enclosed by walls.

"That is the cemetery," said the curate. "Three months before he came—he, the first—to lie there, our dear friend was impressed with the evils that result from putting grave-yards around churches, and, to enforce the law which requires that they shall be at a given distance from all dwelling-houses, he himself gave this piece of ground to the community. To-day we bury a little child in it—beginning thus with Innocence and Virtue. Is death, then, a recompense? Does God teach us a lesson when He calls to Himself two perfect beings? Is the trial of our youth by physical suffering, of our manhood by moral suffering, the way to Him? See, there is the rustic monument we are putting up to him."

Genestas saw a pyramid of earth about twenty feet high, still bare, though the base was partly turfed by

the busy hands of the villagers. The Fosseuse, bathed in tears, was sitting with her head in her hands, on the stones which held in place a large cross made of a fir-tree with the bark left on. The soldier read the following words cut in large letters into the wood.

D. O. M.
HERE LIES
THE GOOD MONSIEUR BENASSIS,
THE FATHER
OF US ALL.
PRAY FOR HIM.

"Was it you, monsieur le curé," said Genestas, "who gave that inscription?"

"No," replied the curate, "we have put the words that have been said and echoed from the tops of those mountains as far as Grenoble."

Standing silent for a moment and then approaching the Fosseuse, who did not hear him, Genestas said to the curate: "As soon as I get my retirement, I shall come back and end my days among you."

BALZAC IN ENGLISH.

MODESTE MIGNON.

TRANSLATED BY

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY.

In "Modeste Mignon" we still have that masterly power of analysis, keen, incisive, piercing superficiality and pretence, as a rapier pierces a doublet, but we have in addition the purity and sweetness of a genuine light comedy, — a comedy which has for its central object the delineation of the mysteries of a young girl's mind.

As a whole, "Modeste Mignon" is not only a masterpiece of French art, but a masterpiece of that master before whom later novelists must pale their ineffectual fires. As the different examples of Balzac's skill are brought before the public through the excellent translations by Miss Wormeley, none competent to judge can fail to perceive the power of that gigantic intellect which projected and carried out the scheme of the *Comédie Humaine*, nor fail to understand the improvement in literature that would result if Balzac's methods and aims were carefully studied by all who aspire to the name of novelist. — *New York Home Journal*.

The public owes a debt of gratitude to the industrious translator of Balzac's masterpieces. They follow one another with sufficient rapidity to stand in striking contrast with each other. The conscientious reader of them cannot but lay down one after another with an increasing admiration for their author's marvellous grasp upon the great social forces which govern the thought and actions of men. In "Modeste Mignon," as in "Eugénie Grandet," we find that the tremulous vibrations of first love in the heart of a young and pure-minded girl are not deemed unworthy of this great artist's study. The delicate growth of a sentiment which gradually expanded into a passion, and which was absolutely free from any taint of sensuality, is analyzed in "Modeste Mignon" with consummate skill. The plot of this book is far from extraordinary. It is even commonplace. But where in these days shall we find another author who can out of such a simple plot make a story like the one before us? The many-sidedness of Balzac's genius is widely acknowledged; but there are probably few people among those whose acquaintance with his writings has been necessarily limited to translations who could conceive of him producing such a bright and sparkling story, thoroughly realistic, full of vitalizing power, keen analysis, and depth of study and reflection, brilliantly imaginative, and showing an elasticity in its creative process which cannot fail to attract every lover of a higher and better art in fiction.

But light and delicate as Balzac's touch generally is throughout this volume, there is also shown a slumbering force which occasionally awakens and delivers a blow that seems as if it had been struck by the hammer of Thor. He ranges over the whole scale of human passion and emotion, penetrates into the very inmost chambers of the heart, apprehends its movements, and lays bare its weakness with a firm and yet delicate touch of his scalpel. The book has been excellently translated by Miss Wormeley. She is fully in sympathy with the author, and has caught his spirit, and the result is a translation which preserves the full flavor, vigor, and delicacy of the original.

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BALZAC IN ENGLISH.

THE MAGIC SKIN.

(LA PEAU DE CHAGRIN.)

TRANSLATED BY

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY.

—◆—
"The Magic Skin" is a great novel,—great in its conception, great in its execution, and great in the impression it leaves upon the reader's mind. Those who deny that Balzac is a moral teacher will retract their opinion after reading this powerful allegory. It is a picturesque representation of the great moral truth that in life we have to pay for every excess we enjoy. In the gradual shrinking of the "Magic Skin" we see the inevitable law that by uncontrolled dissipation of body or mind we use up our physical strength and exhaust our vitality. In that beautiful, cold, fascinating character, *Fédora*, the writer shows us the glittering world of fashion and frivolity which men pursue vainly and find to their cost only dust and ashes. In the gentle, loving, and devoted *Pauline*, Balzac represents the lasting and pure pleasures of domestic life. But in *Raphael's* short enjoyment of them we see the workings of that inflexible law, "Whatever ye sow that shall ye also reap." In the vivid, striking, realistic picture of Parisian life which Balzac presents to us in "The Magic Skin," the writer had a conscious moral purpose. We know of no more awful allegory in literature. — *Boston Transcript*.

The story is powerful and original; but its readers will be most affected by its marvellous knowledge of human nature, and the deep-cutting dissection of character which makes the attempts of our own analytical novelists appear superficial and experimental. Life in all classes of the Paris of Louis Philippe's time is portrayed in the strongest lights and shadows, and with continual flashes of wit, satire, and sarcasm which spare neither politician, philosopher, priest, poet, journalist, artist, man of the world, nor woman of the world. Through a maze of heterogeneous personages *Raphael*, the hero, is carried, pursued by the relentless *Magic Skin*, which drives him mercilessly to his doom. The vices of high society are laid bare; but there is also a beautiful exposition of purity in the humble life of *Pauline*, who is the good angel of the story. In translating "*La Peau de Chagrin*" Miss Wormeley has done work that is at once skilful and discreet. It is a man's book, virile though not vulgar, and exposing prominences in French social views such as most writers veil in obscurities. Here all is frankly and honestly shown, but by a man of genius, who had no more need of prudish hypocrisy than Shakespeare.

Mr. Parsons's thoughtful preface is a fitting introduction to the most wonderful of all Balzac's romances. It is not a whit too strong for Mr. Parsons to write that, saving Shakespeare, "no man could have been better fitted to examine mental processes, to gauge their effects, to estimate their significance and to define their nature and scope" than Balzac. If Balzac had been a German, and not a Frenchman of the French, this book of his would be as much of an epoch-maker as Goethe's "*Faust*." It may take years before the fuller appreciation of "*La Peau de Chagrin*" comes, but it is a study of life which will be studied in centuries yet to come. — *New York Times*.

—◆—
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BALZAC IN ENGLISH.

COUSIN BETTE.

TRANSLATED BY

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY.

He [Balzac] does not make Vice the leading principle of life. The most terrible punishment invariably awaits transgressors. . . . Psychologically considered, "Cousin Bette" with the "Peau de Chagrin" and "The Alkahest" are the most powerful of all Balzac's studies. The marvellous acquaintance this romance-writer had with all phases and conditions of French men and women has never been more strongly accentuated. For a French romance presenting difficulties in translation, Miss Wormeley's work is excellent. Its faithfulness is even remarkable. We can hardly conceive that after this series is completed Balzac will remain unknown or unappreciated by American readers. — *New York Times*.

Balzac aspired to paint French life, especially Parisian life, in all its aspects, — "the great modern monster with its every face," to use his own words; and in no one of his novels is his insight keener, his coloring bolder, or his disclosures of the corruptions of city life more painfully realistic, than in "Cousin Bette." . . . Not one of the admirably rendered series shows more breadth, skill, and sympathy with every characteristic of the great French author than does this. And it is quite a marvel of translation. — *The American, Philadelphia*.

"It is true the book is not for babes, but he must have strange views of innocence who would ignore the influence for good inherent in such a work. Ignorance constitutes but a sorry shield against the onslaughts of temptation. It is well if wisdom can be so cheaply got as by the perusal of the book. — *American Hebrew*.

It is an awful picture, but it is emphatically a work of genius. . . . It cannot be said that "Cousin Bette" is a book for those who like only optimistic presentations of life. It is a study in morbid pathology; an inquiry into the working of passions and vices, the mischief actually caused by what in all human societies is too patent and too constantly in evidence to be denied or ignored. . . . He [Balzac] must be judged by the scientific standard, and from that point of view there can be no hesitation in declaring "Cousin Bette" a most powerful work. — *New York Tribune*.

And there is much in the characters that is improper and fortunately counter to our civilization; still the tone concerning these very things is a healthy one, and Balzac's belief in purity and goodness, his faith in the better part of humanity, is shown in the beautiful purity of Madame Hulot, and the lovely chastity of Hortense. In "Cousin Bette," as in all Balzac's works, he manifests a familiarity with the ethics of life which has gained for him the exalted position as the greatest of French novelists. — *St. Paul Dispatch*.

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BALZAC IN ENGLISH.

LOUIS LAMBERT.

"As for Balzac," writes Oscar Wilde, "he was a most remarkable combination of the artistic temperament with the scientific spirit." It is his artistic temperament which reveals itself the most clearly in the novel before us. As we read "Louis Lambert," we feel convinced that it is largely autobiographical. It is a psychical study as delicate as Amiel's Journal, and nearly as spiritual. We follow the life of the sensitive, poetical schoolboy, feeling that it is a true picture of Balzac's own youth. When the literary work on which the hero had written for years in all his spare moments is destroyed, we do not need to be told by Mr. Parsons that this is an episode in Balzac's own experience; we are sure of this fact already; and no writer could describe so sympathetically the deep spiritual experiences of an aspiring soul who had not at heart felt them keenly. No materialist could have written "Louis Lambert." — *Boston Transcript*.

Of all of Balzac's works thus far translated by Miss Katharine Prescott Wormeley, the last in the series, "Louis Lambert," is the most difficult of comprehension. It is the second of the author's Philosophical Studies, "The Magic Skin" being the first, and "Seraphita," shortly to be published, being the third and last. In "Louis Lambert" Balzac has presented a study of a noble soul—a spirit of exalted and lofty aspirations which chafes under the fetters of earthly existence, and has no sympathy with the world of materialism. This pure-souled genius is made the medium, moreover, for the enunciation of the outlines of a system of philosophy which goes to the very roots of Oriental occultism and mysticism as its source, and which thus reveals the marvellous scope of Balzac's learning. The scholarly introduction to the book by George Frederic Parsons, in addition to throwing a great deal of valuable light upon other phases of the work, shows how many of the most recent scientific theories are directly in line with the doctrines broadly set forth by Balzac nearly sixty years ago. The book is one to be studied rather than read; and it is made intelligible by the extremely able introduction and by Miss Wormeley's excellent translation. — *The Book-Buyer*.

"Louis Lambert," with the two other members of the Trilogy, "La Peau de Chagrin" and "Seraphita," is a book which presents many difficulties to the student. It deals with profound and unfamiliar subjects, and the meaning of the author by no means lies on the surface. It is the study of a great, aspiring soul enshrined in a feeble body, the sword wearing out the scabbard, the spirit soaring away from its prison-house of flesh to its more congenial home. It is in marked contrast to the study of the destructive and debasing process which we see in the "Peau de Chagrin." It stands midway between this study of the mean and base and that noble presentation of the final evolution of a soul on the very borders of Divinity which Balzac gives us in "Seraphita."

The reader not accustomed to such high ponderings needs a guide to place him *en rapport* with the Seer. Such a guide and friend he finds in Mr. Parsons, whose introduction of one hundred and fifty pages is by no means the least valuable part of this volume. It is impossible to do more than sketch the analysis of Balzac's philosophy and the demonstration so successfully attempted by Mr. Parsons of the exact correlation between many of Balzac's speculations and the newest scientific theories. The introduction is so closely written that it defies much condensation. It is so intrinsically valuable that it will thoroughly repay careful and minute study. — *From "Light," a London Journal of Psychical and Occult Research, March 9, 1889.*

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ROBERTS BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
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BALZAC IN ENGLISH.

SONS OF THE SOIL.

Translated by Katharine Prescott Wormeley.

Many critics have regarded "Les Paysans," to which Miss Wormeley, in her admirable translation, has given the title "Sons of the Soil," as one of Balzac's strongest novels; and it cannot fail to impress those who read this English rendering of it. Fifty or sixty years ago Balzac made a profound study of the effects produced by the Revolution upon the peasants of the remote provinces of France, and he has here elaborated these observations in a powerful picture of one of those strange, disguised, but ferocious social wars which were at the time not only rendered possible, but promoted by three potent influences, namely, the selfishness of the rich landholders; the land-hunger and stimulated greed of the peasants; and the calculated rapacity of middle-class capitalists, craftily using the hatreds of the poor to forward their own plots. The first part of "Les Paysans" (and the only part which was published during the author's life) appeared under a title taken from an old and deeply significant proverb, *Qui a terre a guerre*, — "Who has land has war."

It is the account of a guerilla war conducted by a whole country-side against one great land-owner, — a war in which, moreover, the lawless aggressions of the peasantry are prompted, supported, and directed by an amazing alliance between the richest, most unscrupulous, and most powerful of the neighboring provincial magnates, who, by controlling, through family council, the local administration, are in a position to paralyze resistance to their conspiracy. The working out of this deep plot affords the author opportunity for the introduction of a whole gallery of marvellous studies.

It is perhaps hardly necessary to say that this powerful and absorbing story is lifted above the level of romance by the unequalled artistic genius of the author, and that it is at times almost transformed into a profound political study by the depth and acumen of his suggestions and comments. Nor should it be requisite to point out analogies with territorial conditions in more than one other country, which lend to "Les Paysans" a special interest and significance, and are likely to prevent it from becoming obsolete for a long time to come. Of the translation it only need be said that it is as good as Miss Wormeley has accustomed us to expect, and that means the best rendering of French into English that has ever been done. — *New York Tribune.*

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The force and passion of the stories of Balzac are unapproachable. He had the art of putting into half a dozen pages all the fire and stress which many writers, who are still great, cannot compass in a volume. The present volume is an admirable collection, and presents well his power of handling the short story. That the translation is excellent need hardly be said — *Boston Courier*.

The six stories, admirably translated by Miss Wormeley, afford good examples of Balzac's work in what not a few critics have thought his chief specialty. It is certain that no writer of many novels wrote so many short stories as he; and it is equally as certain that his short stories are, almost without an exception, models of what such compositions ought to be. . . . No modern author, however, of any school whatever, has succeeded in producing short stories half so good as Balzac's best. Balzac did not, indeed, attempt to display his subtlety and deftness by writing short stories about nothing. Every one of his tales contains an episode, not necessarily, but usually, a dramatic episode. The first in the present collection, better known as "La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote," is really a short novel. It has all the machinery, all the interest, all the detail of a regular story. The difference is that it is compressed as Balzac only could compress; that here and there important events, changes, etc., are indicated in a few powerful lines instead of being elaborated; that the vital points are thrown into strong relief. Take the pathetic story of "Colonel Chabert." It begins with an elaboration of detail. The description of the lawyer's office might seem to some too minute. But it is the stage upon which the Colonel is to appear, and when he enters we see the value of the preliminaries, for a picture is presented which the memory seizes and holds. As the action progresses, detail is used more parsimoniously, because the *mise-en-scène* has already been completed, and because, also, the characters once clearly described, the development of character and the working of passion can be indicated with a few pregnant strokes. Notwithstanding this increasing economy of space, the action takes on a swifter intensity, and the culmination of the tragedy leaves the reader breathless.

In "The Atheist's Mass" we have quite a new kind of story. This is rather a psychological study than a narrative of action. Two widely distinguished characters are thrown on the canvas here, — that of the great surgeon and that of the humble patron; and one knows not which most to admire, the vigor of the drawing, or the subtle and lucid psychological analysis. In both there is rare beauty of soul, and perhaps, after all, the poor Auvergnat surpasses the eminent surgeon, though this is a delicate and difficult question. But how complete the little story is; how much it tells; with what skill, and in how delightful a manner! Then there is that tremendous haunting legend of "La Grande Bretèche," a story which has always been turned into more languages and twisted into more new forms than almost any other of its kind extant. What author has equalled the continuing horror of that unfaithful wife's agony, compelled to look on and assist at the slow murder of her entrapped lover? . . . Then the death of the husband and wife, — the one by quick and fiercer dissipation, the other by simple refusal to live longer, — and the abandonment of the accursed dwelling to solitude and decay, complete a picture, which for vividness, emotional force, imaginative power, and comprehensiveness of effects, can be said to have few equals in its own class of fiction. — *Kansas City Journal*.

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An Historical Mystery is the title given to "Une Ténébreuse Affaire," which has just appeared in the series of translations of Honoré de Balzac's novels, by Katharine Prescott Wormeley. This exciting romance is full of stirring interest, and is distinguished by that minute analysis of character in which its eminent author excelled. The characters stand boldly out from the surrounding incidents, and with a fidelity as wonderful as it is truthful. Plot and counterplot follow each other with marvellous rapidity; and around the exciting days when Napoleon was First Consul, and afterward when he was Emperor, a mystery is woven in which some royalists are concerned that is concealed with masterly ingenuity until the novelist sees fit to take his reader into his confidence. The heroine, Laurence, is a remarkably strong character; and the love-story in which she figures is refreshing in its departure from the beaten path of the ordinary writer of fiction. Michu, her devoted servant, has also a marked individuality, which leaves a lasting impression. Napoleon, Talleyrand, Fouché, and other historical personages, appear in the tale in a manner that is at once natural and impressive. As an addition to a remarkable series, the book is one that no admirer of Balzac can afford to neglect. Miss Wormeley's translation reproduces the peculiarities of the author's style with the faithfulness for which she has hitherto been celebrated. — *Saturday Evening Gazette*.

It makes very interesting reading at this distance of time, however; and Balzac has given to the legendary account much of the solidity of history by his adroit manipulation. For the main story it must be said that the action is swifter and more varied than in many of the author's books, and that there are not wanting many of those cameo-like portraits necessary to warn the reader against slovenly perusal of this carefully written story; for the complications are such, and the relations between the several plots involved so intricate, that the thread might easily be lost and much of the interest be thus destroyed. The usual Balzac compactness is of course present throughout, to give body and significance to the work, and the stage is crowded with impressive figures. It would be impossible to find a book which gives a better or more faithful illustration of one of the strangest periods in French history, in short; and its attraction as a story is at least equalled by its value as a true picture of the time it is concerned with. The translation is as spirited and close as Miss Wormeley has taught us to expect in this admirable series. — *New York Tribune*.

One of the most intensely interesting novels that Balzac ever wrote is *An Historical Mystery*, whose translation has just been added to the preceding novels that compose the "Comédie Humaine" so admirably translated by Miss Katharine Prescott Wormeley. The story opens in the autumn of 1803, in the time of the Empire, and the motive is in deep-laid political plots, which are revealed with the subtle and ingenious skill that marks the art of Balzac. . . . The story is a deep-laid political conspiracy of the secret service of the ministry of the police. Talleyrand, M^{lle} de Cinq-Cygne, the Princess de Cadigan, Louis XVIII., as well as Napoleon, figure as characters of this thrilling historic romance. An absorbing love-story is also told, in which State intrigue plays an important part. The character-drawing is faithful to history, and the story illuminates French life in the early years of the century as if a calcium light were thrown on the scene.

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Albert Savarus, with Paz (La Fausse
Maitresse) and Madame Firmiani. By
HONORÉ DE BALZAC. Translated by Katharine Prescott
Wormeley.

There is much in this, one of the most remarkable of his books, which is synonymous with Balzac's own life. It is the story of a man's first love for woman, his inspirer, the source from whom he derives his power of action. It also contains many details on his habits of life and work.

THE three short stories in this volume,—'Albert Savarus,' 'Paz' and 'Madame Firmiani'—are chips from that astounding workshop which never ceased its Hephestian labors and products until Balzac was no more. Short stories of this character flew from his glowing forge like sparks from an anvil, the playthings of an idle hour, the interludes of a more vivid drama. Three of them gathered here illustrate as usual Parisian and provincial life, two in a very noble fashion, Balzacian to the core. The third—'Albert Savarus'—has many elements of tragedy and grandeur in it, spoiled only by an abruptness in the conclusion and an accumulation of unnecessary horrors that chill the reader. It is a block of tragic marble hewn, not to a finish, but to a fine prophetic suggestion of what is to follow it — ! The *if* never emerges from conditionality to fulfillment. The beautiful lines and sinuous curves of the nascent statue are there, not fully born of the encasing stone; what sculptors call the 'tenons' show in all their visibility—the supports and scaffolds reveal their presence; the forefront is finished as in a Greek metope or Olympian tympanum, where broken Lapiths and Centaurs disport themselves; but the background is rude and primitive.

In 'Madame Firmiani' a few brilliant pages suffice to a perfect picture,—one of the few spotless pictures of this superb yet sinning magician so rich in pictures. It is French nature that Balzac depicts, warm with all the physical impulses, undisguised in its assaults on the soul, ingeniously sensual, odiously loose in its views of marriage and the marriage relation, but splendidly picturesque. In this brief romance noble words are wedded to noble music. In 'Paz' an almost equal nobility of thought—the nobility of self-renunciation—is attained. Balzac endows his men and women with happy millions and unhappy natures: the red ruby—the broken heart—blazes in a setting of gold. 'Paz,' the sublime Pole who loves the wife of his best friend, a Slav Croesus, is no exception to the rule. The richest rhetoric, the sunniest colors, fail to counteract the Acherontian gloom of these lives and sorrows snatched from the cauldron of urban and rural France,—a cauldron that burns hotter than any other with its strange Roman and Celtic ardors. Balzac was perpetually dipping into it and drawing from it the wonderful and extraordinary incidents of his novels, incidents often monstrous in their untruth if looked at from any other than a French point of view. Thus, the devilish ingenuity of the jealous woman in 'Albert Savarus' would seem unnatural anywhere else than in the sombre French provinces of 1836,—a toadstool sprung up in the rank moonlight of the religious conventual system of education for women; but there, and then, and as one result of this system of repression, it seems perfectly natural. And so does the beautiful self-abnegation of Albert himself, that high-strung soul that could have been born only in nervous and passionate France.

As usual, Miss Wormeley's charming translation floats the reader over these pages in the swiftest and airiest manner.—*The Critic*.

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A complete life of Balzac can probably never be written. The sole object of the present volume is to present Balzac to American readers. This memoir is meant to be a presentation of the man, — and not of his work, except as it was a part of himself, — derived from authentic sources of information, and presented in their own words, with such simple elucidations as a close intercourse with Balzac's mind, necessitated by conscientious translation, naturally gives. The portrait in this volume was considered by Madame de Balzac the best likeness of her husband.

Miss Wormeley's discussion of the subject is of value in many ways, and it has long been needed as a help to comprehension of his life and character. Personally, he lived up to his theory. His life was in fact austere. Any detailed account of the conditions under which he worked, such as are given in this volume, will show that this must have been the case; and the fact strongly reinforces the doctrine. Miss Wormeley, in arranging her account of his career, has, almost of necessity, made free use of the letters and memoir published by Balzac's sister, Madame Surville. She has also, whenever it would serve the purpose of illustration better, quoted from the sketches of him by his contemporaries, wisely rejecting the trivialities and frivolities by the exaggeration of which many of his first chroniclers seemed bent upon giving the great author a kind of opera-bouffe aspect. To judge from some of these accounts, he was flighty, irresponsible, possibly a little mad, prone to lose touch of actualities by the dominance of his imagination, fond of wild and impracticable schemes, and altogether an eccentric and unstable person. But it is not difficult to prove that Balzac was quite a different character; that he possessed a marvellous power of intellectual organization; that he was the most methodical and indefatigable of workers; that he was a man of a most delicate sense of honor; that his life was not simply devoted to literary ambition, but was a martyrdom to obligations which were his misfortune, but not his fault.

All this Miss Wormeley has well set forth; and in doing so she has certainly relieved Balzac of much unmerited odium, and has enabled those who have not made a study of his character and work to understand how high the place is in any estimate of the helpers of modern progress and enlightenment to which his genius and the loftiness of his aims entitle him. This memoir is a very modest biography, though a very good one. The author has effaced herself as much as possible, and has relied upon "documents" whenever they were trustworthy. — *N. Y. Tribune.*

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Balzac in English.

PIERRETTE

AND

THE VICAR OF TOURS.

BY HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

Translated by Katharine Prescott Wormeley.

In *Pierrette*, which Miss Wormeley has added to her series of felicitous translations from the French master-fictionists, Balzac has made within brief compass a marvellously sympathetic study of the martyrdom of a young girl. *Pierrette*, a flower of Brittany, beautiful, pale, and fair and sweet, is taken as an undesired charge by sordid-minded cousins in *Provins*, and like an exotic transplanted into a harsh and sour soil she withers and fades under the cruel conditions of her new environment. Incidentally Balzac depicts in vivid colors the struggles of two shop-keepers — a brother and sister, who have amassed a little fortune in *Paris* — to gain a foothold among the bourgeoisie of their native town. These two become the prey of conspirators for political advancement, and the rivalries thus engendered shake the small provincial society to its centre. But the charm of the tale is in the portrayal of the character of *Pierrette*, who understands only how to love, and who cannot live in an atmosphere of suspicion and ill-treatment. The story is of course sad, but its fidelity to life and the pathos of it are elements of unflinching interest. Balzac brings a score or more of people upon the stage, shows each one as he or she really is both in outward appearance and inward nature, and then allows motives and circumstances to work out an inevitable result. To watch this process is like being present at some wonderful chemical experiment where the ingredients are mixed with a deft and careful hand, and combine to produce effects of astonishing significance. The social genesis of the old maid in her most abhorrent form occupies much of Balzac's attention in *Pierrette*, and this theme also has a place in the story of *The Vicar of Tours*, bound up in this same volume. The vicar is a simple-minded priest who is happy enough till he takes up his quarters with an old maid landlady, who pesters and annoys him in many ways, and finally sends him forth despoiled of his worldly goods and a laughing-stock for the countryside. There is a great deal of humor in the tale, but one must confess that the humor is of a rather heavy sort, it being weighed down by a dominant satirical purpose. — *The Beacon*.

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